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# HE MASTER of GREYLANDS

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THE

# MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

## A Novel.

BY

Wood, Ellen (Price)

"MRS. HENRY WOOD."

AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

## CHAPTER I.

### PLOTTING AND PLANNING.

THE illness of little Marie Guise lasted several days. Sitting by her bed—as she did for hours together—Madame Guise had time, and to spare, to lay out her plans. That is, as far as she could lay them out. Her sole object in life now—save and except the child—was to search out the mystery of her husband's fate; her one hope to bring home the crime to Mr. Castlemaine. How to set about it she knew not. She would have to account in some plausible manner for her prolonged stay at Greylands, and to conceal her real iden-

tity. Above all, she must take care never to betray interest in the fate of Anthony Castlemaine.

To stay in Greylands, or in England at all, might be rather difficult, unless she could get some employment to eke out her means. She knew perfectly well that without her husband's signature, the cautious French bankers and men of business who held his property in their hands, would not advance much, if any, of it to her, unless proofs were forthcoming of his death. She possessed a little income of her own; this was available, and she must concert ways and means of its being transmitted to her in secret, without Greylands learning who she was and what she was. This might be done: but the money would not be enough to support her and her child comfortably as gentlewomen.

"I think I should like to make a sojourn here in Greylands," she observed to Mrs. Bent, cautiously opening the subject, on the first day that Marie could be pronounced convalescent, and was taken down in the parlour for change.

"Why! should you, ma'am!" returned the landlady briskly. "Well, it's a nice place."

"I like the sea—and I should wish my

little one to remain quiet now. I have suffered too much anxiety on her account to take her travelling again just yet."

"Sweet little thing!" aspirated Mrs. Bent. "Her pretty rosy colour is beginning to come back to her cheeks again. I've never seen a child with a brighter."

"It is like her—like that of some of our relatives: they have a bright colour," said Madame Guise, who only just saved herself from saying—like her father's. "For her sake I will remain here for some two or three months. Do you think I could get an apartment?"

"An apartment!" repeated Mrs. Bent, who took the word literally, and was somewhat puzzled at it. "Did you mean one single room, ma'am?"

"I mean two or three rooms—as might be enough. Or a small house—what you call a cottage."

"Oh, I see, ma'am," said the landlady. "I think you might do that. Some of the larger cottages let rooms in the summer to people coming over here from Stilborough for the sea air. And there's one pretty furnished cottage empty on the cliff."

"Would the rent of it be much?" asked

Madame Guise, timorously, for a whole furnished cottage seemed a large enterprise.

"Next to nothing at this season," spoke Mrs. Bent, confidently. "Here, John Bent—where are you?" she cried, flinging open the door. "What's the rent of that place——"

"Master's out," interrupted Molly, coming from the back kitchen to speak.

"Just like him!" retorted Mrs. Bent. "He is out when he's wanted, and at home when he's not. It's always the way with the men. Any way it's a nice little place, ma'am, and I know it would be reasonable."

The cottage she alluded to had a sitting-room, a kitchen, and two bed-chambers, and was situated in the most picturesque part of all the cliff, close to the neatly kept cottage that had so long been inhabited by Miss Hallet and her very pretty niece. It was plainly furnished, and might be let at this season, including steel knives and forks, for fifteen shillings a week, Mrs. Bent thought. In summer the rent would be twenty-five: and the tenant had to find linen.

Madame Guise made a silent computation. Fifteen shillings a week! With the rent, and the cost of a servant, and housekeeping, and various little extras that are somehow never

computed beforehand, but that rise up inevitably afterwards, she saw that the sum total would be more than she could command. And she hesitated to take the cottage.

Nevertheless, she went with Mrs. Bent to see it, and found it just what she would have liked. It was not quite so nice as Miss Hallet's a few yards off: but Miss Hallet took so much care that hers should be perfection.

"If I could but earn a little money!" repeated Charlotte to herself. "I wonder whether those good ladies at the Grey Nunnery could help me! I have a great mind to ask them."

After some deliberation, she went over to do so. It was a warm, pleasant day; for the capricious weather had once more changed; the snow and frost given place to soft west winds and genial sunshine—and Madame Guise was shown into the reception parlour. Sisters Margaret and Grizzel sat in it, and rose at her entrance. They had heard of this lady traveller, who had been detained on her journey by the illness of her little girl, and was staying at the Dolphin; but they had not seen her. It was with some curiosity, therefore, that the ladies gazed to see what she was like. A slender, lady-like, nice-looking young

woman, with blue eyes and fair hair, and who seemed to carry some care on her countenance.

Madame Guise introduced herself; apologising for her intrusion, and telling them at once its object. She wished to make some stay at Greylands, for she thought the pure air and sea-breezes would strengthen her child—could the ladies help her to some employment by which she might earn a trifle. She had a little income, but not quite sufficient. She could teach music and French, or do fine needlework; embroidery and the like.

The ladies answered her very kindly—they were both taken with the gentle stranger—but shook their heads to her petition: they had no help to give.

"The children we bring up here are of poor parentage and do not need accomplishments," said Sister Margaret. "If they did, we should teach them in the Nunnery: indeed we should be thankful to get pupils of a better class ourselves, for we are but poor. Sister Mona is a good French scholar; and Sister Charlotte's music is perfect. As to fine work, we do not know any one who requires it to be done."

"Not but that we should have been glad to help you, if we could," put in Sister Grizzel, with a pleasant smile.

Madame Guise rose, stifling a sigh. She saw exactly how it was—that the Grey Nunnery was about the last place able to assist her. In leaving the parlour, she met a lady, young and stately, who was entering it; one of wondrous beauty, tall, majestic, of gracious manner and presence.

"Our Superior, Sister Mary Ursula," said Sister Grizzel.

And Madame Guise knew that it was her husband's cousin—for Miss Castlemaine had joined the Sisterhood some days past. She wore the clear muslin cap over her luxuriant hair, but not the grey habit, for she had not put aside the mourning for her father. In the magnificent dark eyes, in the bright complexion, and in the beautiful features, Madame Guise saw the likeness to her husband and to the rest of the Castlemaines. Sister Mary Ursula bowed and said a few gracious words: Madame Guise responded with one of her elaborate French curtseys, and passed onwards through the gate.

"So that hope has failed!" she thought as she crossed over to the inn. "I might have

known it would: with so many accomplished ladies among themselves, the Sisters cannot want other people's aid."

Buried in thought, perplexed as to what her future course should be, Madame Guise did not go at once indoors, but sat down on the bench outside the house. The window of the sitting-room, occupied by John Bent and his wife, stood open—for Mrs. Bent liked plenty of fresh air—and people were talking inside. On that same bench had sat more than once her unfortunate husband, looking at the water as she was looking, at the fishermen collected on the beach, at the boats out at sea, their white sails at rest in the calm of the sunshiny day. She was mentally questioning what else she could try, now that her mission to the Grey Sisters had failed, and wondering how little she and Marie could live upon, if she got nothing to do. Gradually the talking became clearer to her ear. She heard the landlady's voice and another voice: not John Bent's, but the young, free, ready voice of a gentleman. It was in truth Harry Castlemaine's; who, passing the inn, had turned in for a gossip.

"It seems to me like a great sacrifice, Mr. Harry," were the first distinct words that fell on Madame Guise's ear. "The Grey Ladies

are very good and noble; next door to angels, I'm sure, when folks are sick; but it is not the right life for Miss Castlemaine to take to."

"We told her so until we were tired of telling it," returned Harry Castlemaine. "It has cut up my father grievously. We will drop the subject, Mrs. Bent: I cannot speak of it with patience yet. How is the sick child getting on?"

"As well as can be, sir. She is just now upstairs in her mid-day sleep. Talking of children, though," broke off Mrs. Bent, "what is this mishap that has happened to Miss Flora? We hear she met with some accident yesterday."

"Mounted to the top of the gardener's ladder and fell off it," said Harry, with equanimity. "She is always in mischief."

"And was she hurt, sir?"

"Not much. Grazed her face in a few places and put her wrist out. She will come to greater grief unless they get somebody to take care of her. Having been so long without a governess, the young damsel is like a wild colt."

"The last time Mrs. Castlemaine passed by here on foot, Mr. Harry, she told me she

had just engaged a governess. It must be a fortnight ago."

"And so she had engaged one; but the lady was taken ill and threw up the situation. Mrs. Castlemaine is hard to please in the matter of governesses. She must have perfect French and perfect music: and the two, united with other requisite qualifications, seem difficult to find. Mrs. Castlemaine was talking this morning of advertising."

"Dear me! to think that such a fine post as that should be going a begging!" cried the landlady. "A gentleman's home and a plenty of comfort in it, and—and however much pay is it a year, Mr. Harry?"

"Fifty guineas, I think," said the young man carelessly, as though fifty guinea salaries were an every day trifle. Mrs. Bent lifted her hands and eyes.

"Fifty guineas!—and her bed and board. And only one little lady to teach; and gentlefolks to live with! My goodness! Mr. Harry, one would think half the ladies in England would jump at it."

*One* lady at least was ready to "jump" at it: she who sat outside, overhearing the tale. The lips of Charlotte Guise parted as she listened; her cheeks flushed red with excite-

ment. Oh, if she herself could obtain this place!—become an inmate of the house where dwelt her husband's enemy, James Castlemaine! How seemingly clear and straightforward would be her path of discovery then, compared with what it would be in that cottage on the cliff, or with any other position she could hope to be placed in! She could daily, hourly watch Mr. Castlemaine; and it must surely be her fault if she did not track home the deed to him! As to her fitness for the post, why French was her native language, and in music she was a finished artiste: and she could certainly undertake general instruction!

While the red flush was yet on her face, the light of excitement in her eyes, Harry Castlemaine came out. Seeing her sitting there, he guessed who she was, took off his hat and politely accosted her, saying he was glad to hear the little girl was improving. Madame Guise rose. It was the first time she had spoken to him.

"I thank you, sir, for your good wishes: yes, she is getting well now. And I—I beg your pardon, sir—I think I heard you just now say to Madame Bent (the window is open) that you found it difficult to get a governess for your house."

"My people find it so. Why?—do you know of one?" he added, smiling.

"I think I do, sir."

"Mrs. Castlemaine is very difficult to please, especially as regards French," he said, still smiling; "and the French of some of the ladies who have applied has turned out to be very English French, so they would not suit her. Should you chance to know of any one really eligible, madam, you would be conferring a favour in introducing the lady to the notice of Mrs. Castlemaine."

"Sir, I will think of it."

He lifted his hat again as he wished her good-day. And Madame Guise, gazing after him, thought again that Heaven was surely working for her, in thus opening a prospect of entrance to the house of Mr. Castlemaine.

## CHAPTER II.

### GETTING IN BY DECEIT.

TURNING out of the Dolphin Inn, by its front entrance, went Charlotte Guise, in her mourning attire. It was a bright afternoon, and the fields were green again. They lay on either side her road—the inland coach road that the stage was wont to traverse. Leaving Mr. Parker's house on her left—for it was in this spot that the doctor's residence was situated—she presently came to the turning to Greylands' Rest, and passed on up the avenue. It was a wide avenue, and not far short of half a mile in length, with trees on either side; oak, elm, birch, larch, poplar, lime, and others. At its end was the gate admitting to the domain of Greylands' Rest.

The house lay still and quiet in the sun-

shine. Madame Guise looked at it with yearning eyes, for it was the place that had probably cost her poor husband his life. But for putting in his claim to it, he might be living yet: and whether that claim was a right or a wrong one, she hoped with her whole heart would be proved before she herself should die. Opening the gate, and passing round the fine green lawn, among the seats, the trees, the shrubs, and the flower-beds, she gained the porch entrance. Miles answered her ring at the bell.

"Can I see Mrs. Castlemaine?"

"Mrs. Castlemaine is out in the carriage, ma'am. Mr. Castlemaine is at home."

Hesitating a moment, for the very name of the Master of Greylands carried to the heart of Charlotte Guise a shrinking dread, and yet fearful lest delay might cause her application to be too late, she said she would be glad to speak with Mr. Castlemaine. Miles admitted her into the hall—a good, old-fashioned room with a wood fire blazing in it. Along a passage to the right lay the drawing-room, and into this room Miles ushered the lady.

Mrs. Castlemaine generally went out for a drive once a day. This afternoon she had taken Flora; whose face was adorned with

sundry patches of sticking-plaster, the result of the fall off the ladder. In the red parlour sat Ethel Reene, painting flowers on cardboard for a hand-screen: and the Master of Greylands stood with his back to the fire, talking with her. They were speaking of Miss Castlemaine.

"Papa, I do not think we must hope it," Ethel was saying. "Rely upon it, Mary will not come out again."

Mr. Castlemaine's face darkened at the words. Though holding the same conviction himself, the step his niece had taken in entering the Nunnery was so unpalatable to him that he could not bear to hear the opinion confirmed or alluded to. He hated the Grey Sisters. He would have rid Greylands of their presence, had it been in his power.

"It is a sin, so to waste her life!" he said, his deep tones betraying his mortification. "Ethel, I think we cannot have made her happy here."

"It was nothing of that, papa. She told me she had been cherishing the idea before she came to Greylands."

"A meddling, tattling, tabby-cat set of women! Mary Ursula ought to——Well, what now, Miles?" For the man had en-

tered the room and was waiting to speak.

"A lady has come here, sir, asking to see Mrs. Castlemaine. When I said the mistress was out, she said she would be glad to speak a few words to you. She is in the drawing-room, sir."

"What lady is it?" returned the Master of Greylands.

"Well, sir, I'm not altogether sure, but I fancy it is the one staying at the Dolphin; her with the sick child. Anyway, she's a very nice, pleasant-speaking young lady, sir, whoever it is."

"I'm sure I don't know what she can want with me," remarked Mr. Castlemaine, as he walked off to the drawing-room, and laid his hand on the door. But thought is quick: and a fancy of what might have brought her here came across his mind ere he turned the handle.

She was seated near the fire in the handsome but low-ceilinged room; her face studiously turned from the one conspicuous portrait that hung opposite the chimney-glass, for its likeness to her husband had struck on her with a chill. She rose at Mr. Castlemaine's entrance and curtseyed as only a

Frenchwoman can curtsey. He saw an elegant-looking young woman with a pleasing countenance and somewhat shrinking manner. Mr. Castlemaine took her to be timid; probably unused to society: for in these, the opening minutes of the interview, she trembled visibly. He of course had heard with the rest of Greylands of the lady traveller who had cut short her journey at the Dolphin Inn in consequence of the illness of her child, and who was supposed to be going on again as soon as she could. Mr. Castlemaine had thought no more about it than that. But the idea that crossed him now was, that this lady, having to encounter the detention at the inn, might be finding herself short of funds to pursue her journey, and had come to apply to him in the difficulty. Readily would he have responded; for he had a generous hand, an open heart. To hear therefore what the real object of her visit was—that of soliciting the situation of governess, vacant in his household, surprised him not a little.

The tale she told was plausible. Mr. Castlemaine, utterly unsuspicious in regard to her, doubted nothing of its truth. The lady made a favourable impression on him, and he was very courteous to her.

She was a widow, she said: and she had come over from Paris to this country for two objects. One was to seek out a relative that she believed was somewhere in it, though she did not know for certain whether he was dead or alive; the other was to obtain employment as a governess—for she had been given to understand that good French governesses were at a premium in the English country, and her own means were but slender, not adequate to the support of herself and little girl. Journeying along by coach, she had found her child attacked with fever, which compelled her to halt at Greylands. Liking the place, perceiving that it was open and healthy, she had been thinking that she should do well to keep her child in it for a time, and therefore was hoping to make her arrangements to do so. Should she be so fortunate as to obtain the post in Mr. Castlemaine's household, the thing would be easy. Very plausibly did she tell the tale; turning, however, hot and cold alternately all the while, and detesting herself for the abhorred deceit.

"But—pardon me, madam—what, in that case, would you do with the child?" asked Mr. Castlemaine.

"I would place her at nurse with some

good woman, sir. That would not be difficult. And the little thing would enjoy all the benefit of the sea-air. In my country, children are more frequently brought up at nurse than at home."

"I have heard so," observed Mr. Castlemaine. "You speak English remarkably well, madam, for a Frenchwoman. Have you been much in this country?"

"Never before, sir. My mother was English, and she always talked to me in her own tongue. I was reared in her faith—the Protestant. My father was French, and a Catholic. Upon their marriage it was agreed that, of the children to be born, the boys should be brought up to his faith and the girls to hers. There came no boy, however; and only one girl—me."

All this was true. Madame Guise did not add, for it was unnecessary, that towards the close of her father's life he entered into large speculations, and became a ruined man. He and her mother were both dead now. She said just what she was obliged to say, and no more.

"And it is, I presume, to see your mother's relatives that you have come to England?" pursued Mr. Castlemaine.

"Yes, sir," she answered after a moment of hesitation; for it came indeed hard to Charlotte Guise to tell a deliberate untruth, although necessity might justify it. "My mother used to talk much of one relative that she had here—a brother. He may not be living now: I do not know."

"In what part of England did he live?"

"I think he must have been a traveller, sir, for he seemed to move about. We would hear of him, now in the south of England, now in the north, and now in the west. Mostly he seemed to be in what my mother called remote counties—Cumberland and Westmoreland."

"Cumberland and Westmoreland!" echoed Mr. Castlemaine. "Dear me! And have you no better clue to him than that?"

"No better, sir; no other. I do not, I say, know whether he is dead or alive."

"Well, it seems—pardon me—to be a somewhat wild-goose chase that you have entered on, this search for him. What is his name?"

"My mother's maiden name was Williams. He was her brother."

Mr. Castlemaine shook his head. "A not at all uncommon name," he said, "and I fear,

madam, you might find some difficulty in tracing him out."

"Yes, I fear so. I find those places are very far off. At any rate, I will not think more of it for the present. My little child, I see it now, is too young to travel."

In all this account, Madame Guise had spoken the simple truth. The facts were as she stated. The only falsehood in it was, the representation that it was this relative, this never-yet-met uncle, she had come over to search out. During her long journey through France, she had said to herself that after she had found her husband, they might perhaps go together to seek her uncle: but that was all.

"Yes, the little one is too young and delicate to travel," pursued Madame Guise, "and I dare not take her on. This illness of hers has frightened me, and I shall, if possible, remain here by the sea."

"I presume, madam—pardon me—that you were hoping to obtain help from this uncle."

"Yes," was the answer, given falteringly. "Should you admit me into your house, sir, I will do my best to help on the studies of your daughter."

"But—will you reconcile yourself to fill a situation of this kind in a stranger's house, after having ruled in a home of your own?" questioned Mr. Castlemaine considerately, as he remembered his wife's domineering and difficult temper.

"Ah, sir, the beggars, you know, must not be the choosers. I must do something to keep me, and I would like to do this."

"The salary Mrs. Castlemaine offers is fifty guineas."

"It seems a large sum to me, sir," was the truthful and candid answer. "Appointments in France, a very few excepted, are not so highly paid as in England. I should of course be permitted to go out to see my child?"

"Dear me, yes: whenever you pleased, madam. You would be quite at liberty here—be as one of ourselves entirely. Mrs. Castlemaine—but here she is; returning home."

The Master of Greylands had heard the carriage drawing up. He quitted the room, and said a few hasty words to his wife of what had occurred. Mrs. Castlemaine, much taken with the project, came in, in her black satin pelisse, coated with crape. She sat

down and put a few questions as to the applicant's acquirements.

"I am a brilliant pianist, madam, as I know you sometimes phrase it in your country," said Madame Guise. "My French is of course pure; and I could teach dancing. Not drawing; I do not understand it."

"Drawing is quite a minor consideration," replied Mrs. Castlemaine. "Could you undertake the English?"

"Why not, madam? I am nearly as well read in English as in French. And I am clever at embroidery, and other kinds of fine and fancy needlework."

"Do you fully understand that you would have to undertake Miss Reene's music also? She is my step-daughter."

"It would be a pleasure to me, madam. I am fond of music."

Mr. Castlemaine came into the room again at this juncture. "What part of France have you lived in?" he asked. "Did I understand you to say in Paris?"

Another necessary lie, or next door to one, for Charlotte Guise! Were she to say, "My native province is that of the Dauphiné, and I have lived near Gap, it might open their eyes to suspicion at once. She

swallowed down a cough that rose, partly choking her.

"Not quite in Paris, sir. A little beyond it."

"And—pardon me—could you give references?"

Madame Guise looked up helplessly. The colour rose in her face; for the fear of losing the appointment became very present to her.

"I know not how. I never was a governess before; and in that respect no one could speak for me. I am of respectable family: my father was a rentier, and much considered. For myself, I am of discreet conduct and manners,—surely you cannot doubt it," she added, the tears of emotion rising to her eyes, as she looked at them.

They looked back in return: Mr. Castlemaine thinking what a nice, ladylike, earnest woman she was, one he could take on trust; Mrs. Castlemaine, entirely seduced by the prospect of the pure French for Flora, eagerly wanting to ratify the bargain. Madame Guise mistook the silence, supposing they were hesitating.

"I could have a letter written to you from Paris," she said. "I possess a friend there, who will, I am sure, satisfy you that I am of

good conduct and family. Would there be more than this required?"

"Not *any* more, it would be *quite* sufficient," Mrs. Castlemaine hastened to say with emphasis. And, without waiting for the promised letter—which, as she observed, could come later—she engaged the governess on the spot. Mr. Castlemaine attended Madame Guise to the door: and never a suspicion crossed him that she was—who she was. How should it? How was he likely to connect this lady-traveller—detained at the place by accident, so shy in manner, so evidently distressed for her child—with the unfortunate Anthony, lost since that fatal February night?

Madame Guise went out from the interview. In some respects it had not been satisfactory: or, rather, not in accordance with her ante-impressions. She had gone to it picturing Mr. Castlemaine as some great monster of iniquity: some crafty, cruel, sinister man, from whom the world might shrink. She found him a very good-looking, pleasing, and polished gentleman, with a high-bred air, a kind and apparently sincere manner, and with the wonderful face-resemblance to his brother Basil and to her own poor husband. How had it been possible, she asked herself, for so appa-

rently correct a man to commit that most dreadful crime, and still be what he was? How wickedly deceitful some great criminals were!

Mrs. Bent, when consulted, made strong objection to the nursing scheme, expressing a most decided opinion against it.

"Put the sweet little child to any one of those old women! Why, the next news we got would be that she had been let roll down the cliff, or had fell into the sea! I should not like to risk it for a child of mine, ma'am."

"I must do something with her," said Madame Guise, setting her lips tightly. Give up her plan, she would not; she believed Heaven itself had aided her in it; but no one knew how much it cost her to part with this great treasure, her child. From the hour of its birth, it had never been away from her. The devotion of some French women to their children seems as remarkable as is the neglect of others.

"There's one thing you might do with her, ma'am, if you chose—and a far better thing too than consigning her to any old nurse-woman."

"What is that?"

"Well, I'll take the liberty of suggesting

it," cried Mrs. Bent. "Put her to the Grey Sisters."

"The Grey Sisters!" echoed Madame Guise, struck with the suggestion. "But would they take one so young, think you? A little child who can scarcely speak!"

"I think they'd take her and be glad of it. Why, ma'am, children are like playthings to them. They have the fishermen's children there by day to teach and train; and they keep 'em by night too when the little ones are sick."

No suggestion could have been more welcome to Madame Guise. The wonder was, that she had not herself thought of it: she no doubt would have done so had Marie been older. To put the matter at rest, she went over at once to the Nunnery. Sister Charlotte received her, and heard her proposal joyfully.

Admit a dear little child as a boarder amongst them! Yes, that they would; and take the most loving care of her; and train her, they hoped, to find the road to Heaven. They would be glad to have two or three little ones of the better class, no matter what the age; the bit of money paid for them would be an assistance, for the Sisterhood was but

poor. Though, indeed, now that the new Sister, Mary Ursula—Miss Castlemaine—had joined them, they were better off.

"I am so glad to hear you say she may come," said Madame Guise. "I had feared that my little one was too young. She must have everything done for her, and she cannot speak plainly. English she does not speak at all, though she understands it."

"She will soon speak it with us: and we will try and make her quite happy. But I must summon our Superior," added Sister Charlotte, "for I may not take upon myself to decide this, though I know how welcome it will be."

The Superior came in, in the person of Miss Castlemaine. Alas, no longer to be called so—but Sister Mary Ursula. She swept in, in her silk mourning dress, and with the muslin cap shading her beautiful hair, and greeted Madame Guise with all her winning and gracious manner, holding out her hand in welcome. In some turn of the face, or in some glance of the eye—it was hard to define what—so strong a likeness to the lost and ill-fated Anthony momentarily shone out from Miss Castlemaine's countenance, that poor Madame Guise felt faint. But she had to control all

feeling now; she had passed into another character and left herself out of sight behind.

Seated opposite to her, giving to her her best attention, her fine head gently bent, her soft, but brilliant eyes thrown upon her, Sister Mary Ursula listened to the story Madame Guise told. She had engaged herself as governess at Greylands' Rest, and wished to be allowed to place her child with the Grey Ladies.

"Is the situation at Greylands' Rest one that you think will suit you?—do you feel that it is what you will like to undertake?" Miss Castlemaine inquired when the speaker paused: for at the first moment she had thought that it was only her opinion that was being asked.

"Yes, I do. I am very much pleased to have obtained it."

"Then I can only say that I hope you will be happy in it, and find it all you can wish. I am sure you will like my uncle. Your pupil, Miss Flora Castlemaine, is self-willed, and has been much indulged by her mother. You will be able, I trust, to bring her to better ways."

"And you will take my little girl, madam?"

"Certainly. It is very good of you to confide her to us."

"It is very good of you to agree to take her, madam. I am so glad! And how much shall I pay you for her? Say by the trimestre—the three months?"

Miss Castlemaine shook her head with a smile. "I have not been here long enough to act on my own judgment," she said: "upon all knotty points I consult Sister Mildred. We will let you know in the course of the day."

Madame Guise rose. But for the dreadful suspicion that lay upon her, the crime she was going out of her own character to track, she would have liked to throw herself into the arms of this gracious lady, and say with tears, "You are my husband's cousin. Oh, pity me, for I was Anthony's wife!" But it might not be. She had entered on her task, and must go through with it.

And when a dainty little note in Sister Margaret's writing was brought over to the Dolphin in the evening by Sister Ann, Madame Guise found that the ladies had fixed a very small sum as payment for her child—four pounds the quarter: or, sixteen pounds the year.

"Cent francs par trimestre," commented Madame Guise in her own language. "It is quite moderate: but Marie is but a little one."

The child went over on the following day. She was entered as Mademoiselle Marie Guise. Very much astonished would those good ladies have been had they known her true name to be that of their Superior—Mary Ursula Castlemaine! There was no fear of the child betraying secrets. She was a very *backward* child, not only in speech; she seemed to have forgotten all about her father, and she could not have told the name of her native place, where it was, or anything about it, if questioned ever so. Trouble was expected with her at the parting. Her mother was advised not to attempt to see her for some three or four days after she went over to the Nunnery: but rather to give her time to get reconciled to the change, and to this new abode.

It was cruel penance to the mother, this parting; worse than it could have been to the child. Those who understand the affection of some French mothers for their children, and who remember that the little ones never leave their side, will know what this must have been for Charlotte Guise. She

saw Marie at a distance on the following day, Sunday—for it happened to be Saturday that the child went in. The little church was filled at the three o'clock afternoon service, when Parson Marston gabbled through the prayers and the sermon to the edification of his flock. Little Marie sat in the large pew with the Grey Ladies, between Sister Mary Ursula in her black attire, and Sister Betsey in her grey. The latter, who had a special love for children, had taken the little one under her particular charge. Marie was in black also: and a keen observer might have fancied there was some sort of likeness between her and the stately Head Sister beside her. The child looked happy and contented. To the scandal of the surrounders, no doubt far more to them than to that of the Parson himself, whose mouth widened with a laugh, she, happening to espy out her mother when they were standing up to say the belief, extended her hands, called out "Maman! maman!" and began to nod incessantly. Sister Betsey succeeded in restoring decorum.

Madame Guise sat with Mr. and Mrs. Bent, occupying the post of honour at the top of the pew. After that, she strove to hide herself from Marie. In the square,

crimson-curtained pew pertaining to Greylands' Rest, the only pew in the church with any pretensions to grandeur, sat the Master of Greylands and his family: his wife with a pinched face, for she had contrived to take cold; Harry, tall as himself, free and fascinating; Flora staring about with the plaster patches on her face; and Ethel Reene, devout, modest, lovely. They were all in black: the mourning worn for Mr. Peter Castlemaine. Their servants, also in mourning, occupied a pew behind that of the Grey Ladies. It might have been noticed that Mr. Castlemaine never once turned his head towards these ladies: he had never favoured them, and the step taken by his niece in joining their society had vexed him more materially than he would have liked to say. He had his private reasons for it: he had cause to wish those ladies' backs turned on Greylands; but he had no power to urge their departure openly, or to send them by force away.

Very dull was poor Charlotte Guise all that Sunday evening. She would not meet the little one on coming out of church, but mixed with the people to avoid it. Her heart yearned to give a fond word, a tender kiss;

but so anxiously bent was she upon entering Greylands' Rest, that she shrank from anything that might impede it, or imperil the child's stay at the Nunnery. After taking tea in her parlour, she sat awhile in her own room above stairs; indulging her sadness. It was sometimes worse than she knew how to bear. She might not give way to grief, distress, anguish in the presence of the world; *that* might have betrayed her to suspicion; but there were moments, when alone, that she yielded to it in all its bitterness. The fathomless sea, calm to-night, was spread out before her, grey and dull, for the rays of the setting sun had left it: did that sea cover the body of him whom she had loved more than life? To her left rose the Friar's Keep—she could almost catch a glimpse of its dark walls if she stretched her head well out at the casement: at any rate, she could see this end of the Grey Nunnery, and that was something. Did that Friar's Keep, with its dark tales, its superstitious stories—did that Keep contain the mystery? She fully believed it did. From the very first, the description of the building had seized on her mind, and left its dread there. It was *there* she must look for the traces of her husband's

fate; perhaps even for himself. Yes, she believed that the grim walls covered him, not the heaving sea.

"Oh Anthony! my ill-fated, wronged husband!" she cried, raising her clasped hands upwards in her distress and speaking through her blinding tears, "may the good God help me to bring your fate to light!"

The shades of twilight were deepening. Fishermen with their wives and children were wending their way homewards after the Sunday evening's walk—the one walk taken together of the seven days. Two of the Grey Ladies came down from the cliff and went towards the Nunnery: Madame Guise, who by this time had made acquaintance with some of the inhabitants, wondered whether anybody was ill in the cottages there. A good many dwellings were scattered on this side the cliff: some of them pretty, commodious homes, others mere huts.

Once more, as she stood there at the casement window, Charlotte Guise asked herself whether she was justified in thus entering Greylands' Rest under a false aspect—justified even by the circumstances. She had revolved the same question in her mind many

times during the past few days, and the answer had always been, as it was now, in the affirmative. And she was of a straightforward, honourable nature; although the reader may be disposed to judge the contrary. That Mr. Castlemaine had taken her husband's life; taken it in wilful malice and wickedness that he might retain his usurpation of Greylands' Rest, she did not entertain a shade of doubt of: she believed, religiously believed, that the mission of tracking out this crime was laid upon her by Heaven: and she did consider herself justified in taking any steps that might forward her in it; any steps in the world, overhanded or underhanded, short of doing injury to any innocent person. Her original resolve had been, merely to stay in the village, seek out what information she could, and wait; but the opportunity having been offered her in so singularly marked a manner (as she looked upon it) of becoming an inmate of Mr. Castlemaine's home, she could not hesitate in embracing it. And yet, though she never faltered in her course, though an angel from Heaven would hardly have stopped her entrance, believing, as she did, that the entrance had been specially opened for her, every now and again qualms

of conscience pricked her sharply, and she hated the whole proceeding.

"But I cannot leave Anthony alone in the unknown grave," she would piteously tell herself at these moments. "And I can see no other way to discovery; and I have no help from any one to aid me in it. If I entered upon the investigation openly, declaring who I am, that might be worse than fruitless: it would put Mr. Castlemaine on his guard; he is more clever than I, he has all power here, while I have none; and Anthony might remain where he is, unavenged, for ever. No, no, I must go on in my planned-out course."

The sea became more grey; the evening star grew bright in the sky; people had gone within their homes and the doors were shut. Madame Guise, tired with the wearily-passing hours, sick and sad at her own reflections, put on her bonnet and warm mantle to take a bit of a stroll over to the beach. Mrs. Bent happened to meet her as she gained the passage below. The landlady was looking so unusually cross that Madame Guise noticed it.

"I have been giving a word of a sort to Mr. Harry Castlemaine," she explained, as

they entered her sitting-room. "You be quiet, John Bent: what I see right to do, I shall do. Mr. Harry will go too far in that quarter if he does not mind."

"Young men like to talk to pretty girls all the world over; they did in my time, I know, and they do in this," was John's peaceful answer, as he rose from his fire-side chair at his guest's entrance. "But I don't see, wife, that it's any good reason for your pouncing upon Mr. Harry as he was going by to his home, and saying what you did."

"Prevention's better than cure," observed Mrs. Bent, in a short tone. "As to young men liking to talk to pretty girls, that's all very well when they are equals in life; but when it comes to a common sailor's daughter and a gentleman, it's a different thing."

"Jane Hallet's father was not a common sailor!"

"He was not over much above it," retorted Mrs. Bent. "Because the Grey Sisters educated her and made much of her, would you exalt her into a lady? you never had proper sense, John Bent, and never will have."

"I call Miss Hallet a lady," said John.

"You might call the moon a lantern if you chose, but you couldn't make other folks do

it. As to Jane, she is too pretty to be followed by Mr. Harry Castlemaine. Why, he must have been walking with her nearly ever since tea!"

"He intends no harm, Dorothy, I'll answer for it."

"Harm comes sometimes without intention, John Bent. Mr. Harry's as thoughtless and random as a March hare. I've seen what I have seen: and Jane Hallet had better keep herself in future out of his company."

"Well, your speaking to him did no good, wife. And it was not respectful."

"Good! it's not likely it would do good with him," conceded Mrs. Bent. "He turns everything into laughter. Did you hear how he began about my Sunday cap, asking for the pattern of it, and setting Molly off in a grin! She nearly dropped the scuttle of coals she was bringing in—good evening then, ma'am, for the present, if you are going for your little stroll."

Madame Guise, leaving her host and hostess to settle their difference touching Mr. Harry Castlemaine, went over to the beach and walked about there. The shades grew deeper; the stars came out brightly: night was upon the earth when she retraced her

steps. Thinking of her little one, she did not go into the inn, but walked past the Grey Nunnery : she knew she should not see the child, but it was a satisfaction only to look at the window of the room that contained her. Soon Madame Guise came to the gate of the chapel ruins ; and some impulse prompted her to open it and enter. But she first of all looked cautiously around to make sure she was not being watched : once let it be known that she held any particular interest in this place, and her connection with him who had been lost within it might be suspected ! When we hold a dangerous secret, the conscience is more than sensitive : and Madame Guise was no exception to the rule.

She crossed the ruins, and stood looking out on the sea, so grand from thence. It was low water ; she saw the rude steps by which the little beach below might be gained, but would not have liked to venture down. The steps were hazardous for even a strong man, and perhaps were not used from one month's end to another : the slime and sea-weed made them slippery. After she had gazed her fill, she turned to the Friar's Keep, and made her way into it by the gothic door between the once firm walls.

Oh, but it was dark here! By what she could make out, when her sight got used to the gloom, she seemed to be amidst the arches of some pillared cloisters. While looking on this side and that side, striving to pierce the mysteries, taking a step this way and a step that, and trembling all the while lest she should see the revenant, said to haunt the place, a dreadful sound, like the huge fluttering of large wings, arose above in the arches. Poor Charlotte Guise, superstitious by nature and education, and but young in years yet, was seized with a perfect acme of terror; of terror too great to scream. Was it the spirit of her husband, striving to communicate with her, she wondered—and oh blame her not too greatly. She had been reared in the fear of "revenants;" she earnestly believed that the dead were sometimes permitted to revisit the earth. Silence supervened, and her terror grew somewhat less intense. "Is your grave here, Anthony?" she murmured; "are you buried in some corner of this lonesome place, away from the eye of man? Oh, hear me while I repeat my vow to search out this dreadful mystery! To the utmost of the power that circumstances and secrecy leave me, will I strive to find you,

Anthony; and bring home to Mr. Castlemaine——"

A worse noise than before; an awful fluttering and flapping right above her head. She screamed out now, terrified nearly to death. The echoes repeated her scream; and the rushing wings, with another kind of scream, not half so shrill as hers, went out through the broken wall and flew across the sea. She felt just as though she were dropping into her grave. Was it the revenant of the place?—or was it the revenant of her husband?—*what* was it? Cowering there, her face prone against a column, Charlotte asked herself these dread questions: and never once, until her alarm was somewhat subsiding, did she think of what her reason might have shown her at first—that it was an owl. An owl, angry at its precincts being invaded: or perhaps some large sea-bird.

With her face white as death, and her limbs shaking as though in an ague fit, she made her way to the entrance gate again; passed through it, and so got away from the Friar's Keep.

## CHAPTER III.

### AT GREYLANDS' REST.

"NON, mademoiselle, je n'en veux pas."

"Because Ethel understands French as well as you do, that's no reason why I should. If you tell me in French what I have to do, of course I can't do it, for I don't know a word you say."

It was the first morning of the studies, Tuesday, Madame Guise having entered the previous day. She, Ethel, and Flora were seated round the table in the school-room, a small apartment looking to the kitchen-garden, with an old carpet on its floor, painted segged chairs, and a square piano against the wall opposite the fire. Ethel was copying music. Madame Guise was endeavouring to ascertain the advancement of Miss Flora in her studies,

with a view to arranging their course in future, speaking in French, and requiring the replies to be in French. But the young lady obstinately persisted in making them in English.

"Whatever you do, Madame Guise, please speak *always* to Flora in French," had been Mrs. Castlemaine's first charge to the new governess. "Above all things, I wish her to be a good French scholar, and to speak it as fluently as Miss Reene does." But here, at the very outset, Miss Flora was demurring to the French, and protesting she could not understand it.

Madame Guise hesitated. She did not choose to be met by wilful disobedience; on the other hand, to issue her mandates in an unknown language would be simply waste of time. She turned her eyes questioningly on Ethel.

"I am not quite sure, madame, one way or the other," said Ethel, replying in French. "Flora ought to be able to understand it; and to speak it a little too; but she has always been inattentive. Miss Oldham and the governesses who preceded her did not speak French as you do: perhaps they were not particular that Flora should speak it."

"How is it that you speak it so well?" asked Madame.

"I? Oh, I had a French nurse when I was a child, and then a French governess; and to finish my education I went to Paris for two years."

"All the three governesses I have had here did not speak French to me," interrupted Flora, resentfully. "Not one of them."

"Have you had three governesses? That is a great many, considering you are yet young," observed Madame, in English.

"They were all bad ones," said the girl.

"Or was it that you were a bad pupil? You must be a better one with me."

Ethel's shapely head, with its bright dark hair, was bent over her copying again: she said nothing. Madame Guise determined to speak in English to the child for at least this morning, until the studies should be put in train.

"We will begin with your English grammar"—taking up the dog-eared, untidy book. "How far have you advanced in it, Miss Flora?"

"I don't like grammar."

"How far have you advanced in it?" equably pursued Madame.

"I don't recollect."

"To begin English grammar again," spoke Madame, addressing herself, and making a note on paper with a pencil.

"I shan't begin it again."

"You will not say to me I shall or I shan't; you will do what I please," quietly corrected Madame. "This is your English history. What reign are you in?"

Miss Flora had her elbows on the table, her hands under her chin, and her pretty face pushed out defiantly opposite Madame. The patches of plaister were nearly all gone; her light curls, tied back with black ribbon, hung low behind. She wore a black frock and white pinafore.

"Which of the kings' reigns are you in?" pursued Madame.

"Not in any. I know them all. Charles the Second was beheaded; and Henry the Eighth had ten wives: and Guy Faux blew up the gunpowder plot; and Elizabeth boxed people's ears."

"Oh," said Madame, "I think we shall have to begin *that* again. Are you good at spelling?"

"I can't spell at all. I hate it. Mamma says I need not learn to spell."

"I fancy that cannot be true. How will you write letters if you cannot spell?"

"Who wants to write letters?—I don't."

"Flora!" put in Ethel in a warning tone.

The girl turned angrily on Ethel. "Nobody asked *you* to speak: mind your copying."

"Mind your manners," said Ethel, nodding to her.

"Not for you, or for anybody else in this room."

"It is very unpleasant to hear young ladies say these rude things," interposed Madame. "As your governess, Miss Flora, I shall not permit it."

"That's what my other governesses would say," retorted Flora. "It made no difference to me."

"If the other governesses did not do their duty by you, it is no reason why I should not do mine," said Madame. "Your papa has charged me with forming your manners; if I have trouble in doing it I am to appeal to him."

Flora was silent. The one only authority she feared, in the house or out of it, was her father's. *He* would not be trifled with, however her mother might be.

"I hate governesses, Madame Guise. I'd like to know what they were invented for."

"To teach ignorant and refractory children to become good young ladies," spoke Madame, who did not seem in the least to lose her temper. Flora did not like the calmness: it augured badly for the future. It was so totally unlike her experience of former governesses. *They* were either driven wild, or had subsided into a state of apathy.

"I drove those other governesses away, and I'll drive you. I'll never do anything you tell me. I won't learn and I won't practise."

"The less you learn, the more persistently I will stay on to make you," said Madame, quite unruffled. "A lesson that you do not get by heart to-day, you will have to get to-morrow: the studies broken off this week, must be completed next. As to your trying to drive me away, it will be labour lost; I simply tell you I am not to be driven. If there is anything I like, and for which I think I have an especial fitness, it is the ruling of refractory children. We shall see which will be strongest, Miss Flora, you or I."

"Once, when one of my governesses wanted

to *make* me learn, I had a fever. Mamma said it was all her fault."

"Very good," said Madame. "We will risk the fever. If you get one I will nurse you through it. I am a capital nurse."

Ethel burst out laughing. "The fever was a headache, Flora; you brought it on with crying."

"You ugly story-teller! I did have a fever. I lay in bed and had broth."

"Yes, for a day. Why, you have never had a fever in your life. Mr. Parker saw you and brought some medicine; you would not take it and got up."

"Ugh! you old tell-tale!"

"Come to my side, Miss Flora," spoke Madame. "You will stand here and read a little of French and of English that I may see how you read. And I must tell you that if we have not got through this morning what we want to get through and put the studies en train, I shall not allow you to go out this afternoon, and I shall request that you may have no dinner. Instead of that, you will stay in this room with me. Mind! I never break my word."

After a few moments' delay, the young lady moved round. Probably she saw that

her new mistress was *not* one to break her word. And, thus, a beginning made, the morning wore away rather better than its commencement had promised. Never was there a child with better abilities than Flora Castlemaine: it was only the will to use them that was lacking. She had been brought up to exercise her own will and disobey that of others. Bad training! bad training for a child.

Putting aside the difficulties attending the instruction and management of Miss Flora, Madame Guise found the residence at Greylands' Rest not at all an unpleasant one. The routine of the day was this. Breakfast—which meal was taken all together in the red parlour—at eight o'clock. Flora until dinner-time; half past one. Ethel's music lesson of an hour, was given during the afternoon: Flora being generally out with her mamma or racing about the premises and grounds on her own account. Tea at five; one hour given to Flora afterwards, to help her to prepare her lessons or exercises for the following day: and then Madame's duties were over.

Little did Mr. Castlemaine imagine that the pleasant, though always sad young lady, who was so efficient an instructress for the

young plague of the house, was his ill-fated nephew's widow. He was somewhat taken aback when he heard that Madame Guise had placed her child at the Grey Nunnery, and knitted his brow in displeasure. However, the child's being there, so long as the ladies were, could make no difference to him: it was the Sisterhood he wanted away, not the child.

Charlotte Guise never went out during the day—except on Sundays to church. Ethel would try to coax her abroad in the afternoons, but hitherto she had not succeeded. In the evening, after Flora was done with, Madame would put her bonnet on and stroll out alone: sometimes to the Nunnery to see her child, whose enforced absence only made her the dearer to her mother's heart.

"Why will you not go out with me?" asked Ethel one afternoon, when she and Madame Guise rose from the piano in the red parlour —for the old square piano in the school-room was for the benefit of the unskilled fingers of Miss Flora only. "See how pleasant everything looks! It is quite spring weather now."

"Yes it is spring weather, but I feel a little cold always, and I don't care to go," answered

Madame Guise. "I will go when summer comes."

They sat down before the French window, Ethel opening it to the pleasant air. Madame Guise had been wishing ever since she was in the house to put a question to this fair young girl, whom she had already learned to love. But she had not yet dared to do it: conscience was always suggesting fears of her true identity being discovered: and now that she did speak it was abruptly.

"Have any tidings been heard yet of the young man said to have been lost in the Friar's Keep?"

"No, not any," replied Ethel.

"Is it true, think you, that he was killed?"

Ethel Reene flushed painfully: she could not forget what she had overheard John Bent say.

"Oh, I hope not. Of course, his disappearance is very strange; more than strange. But if—if anything did happen to him that night, it might have been by accident."

"I heard about the matter when I was at the Dolphin," observed Madame Guise, as if wishing to account for speaking of it. "It took much hold upon my interest; it seemed so strange and sad. Did you ever see that Mr. Anthony, Ethel?"

"Yes, I saw him twice. I was prejudiced against him at first, but I grew to like him. I should have liked him very much had he lived; I am sure of it: quite as a brother. Miss Castlemaine of Stilborough liked him: and I think the mystery of his loss has lain heavily upon her."

"What prejudiced you against him?" asked Charlotte.

Ethel smiled, and told the tale. She gave the history of their two meetings; gave it in detail. The tongue is ready when it has a sympathetic hearer: never a more wrapt one than she who listened now.

Ethel rose as she concluded it. The disappearance was a subject she did not care to speak of or dwell upon. Unable to believe Mr. Castlemaine otherwise than innocent, she yet saw that a prejudice had arisen against him.

"Then you will not come out with me, madame?"

"Many thanks, but no."

"What will you do with yourself all day to-morrow?" asked Ethel.

"I shall take holiday," replied Madame Guise, with a flush of colour.

For on the morrow the whole of the family

were going from home, having promised to spend the day with some friends who lived near Newerton.

The flush had been caused by Charlotte Guise's self-consciousness. True, she would take holiday on the morrow from her duties; that went as a matter of course; but she was purposing to use the day, or part of it, in endeavouring to make some discovery. These twelve days had she been in the house now, and she was no farther advanced than when she entered it. She had seen Mr. Castlemaine daily; she had conversed with him, dined and taken other meals in his company; but for all the enlightenment she had obtained, or the new ideas she had gathered of the doings of that ill-fated February night, he and she might as well have been far apart as are the two poles. It was not by going on in this tame way that she could hope to obtain any clue to the past: the past to which she had made a vow to devote herself.

The morning rose brightly, and the family went off after breakfast in the carriage, Harry sitting on the box with the coachman. Madame Guise was left alone.

A feverish desire had been upon her to

enter Mr. Castlemaine's room upstairs ; the study where he kept the accounts pertaining to his estate, and wrote his letters. In this room he passed many hours daily, sitting in it sometimes late into the night. Charlotte Guise held an impression that if she could find tokens or records of her lost husband, it would be there. But she had never yet obtained so much as a glimpse of its interior : the room was considered sacred to Mr. Castlemaine, and the family did not approach it.

Two or three of the women servants had obtained permission to absent themselves that day to visit their friends ; and the house was comparatively deserted. Madame Guise, looking forth from her chamber, found all silent and still : the upstairs work was over ; the servants, those who remained at home, were shut up in the remote kitchens. Now was her time ; now, if ever.

The corridor was spacious. It ran along two sides of the house, and most of the bed chambers opened from it. Mr. Castlemaine's study was the middle room in the side corridor ; Madame's bedroom was nearly opposite the room ; the one beyond hers being Harry Castlemaine's.

Standing outside her door, in the still si-

lence, with a flushed face and panting breath, not liking the work she was about to do, but believing it a necessity thrown upon her, she at length softly crossed the corridor and opened the outer door leading to the study. A short, dark, narrow passage not much more than a yard in length, and there was another door. This was locked, but the key was in it; she turned the key, and entered the room. Entered it with some undefined feeling of disappointment, for it was bare and empty.

We are all apt to form ideas of places and things as yet unseen. The picture of Mr. Castlemaine's study, in the mind of Charlotte Guise, had been of a spacious apartment filled with furniture, and littered with papers. What she saw was a small square room, and no earthly thing in it, papers or else, but two tables, some chairs, and a bureau against the wall: or what would have been called in her own land a large sécrétoire, or office desk. She gazed around her with a blank face.

The tables and chairs were bare: no opportunity *there* for anything concealed. The bureau was locked. She tried it; pulled it, pushed it: but the closed-down lid was firm as adamant.

"If there exists any record of him, it is in

here," she said, half aloud. "I must contrive means of opening it."

She could not do that to-day. It would have to be done with a false key, she supposed; and, that, she had not in her possession. Before quitting the room, she approached the window, and looked forth cautiously. At the sea rolling in the distance; at the Friars' Keep opposite; at the fair green lands lying between that and Graylands' Rest. Charlotte Guise shuddered at a thought that crossed her.

"If he did indeed kill my poor husband and has laid him to rest in the Friar's Keep, how can he bear to be in this room, with that building in front to remind him of the deed?"

The day was before her: it was not yet twelve o'clock. Blankly disappointed with her failure, she put on her things to go abroad: there was nothing to stay in for. At the last moment a thought struck her that she would go to Stilborough. She wanted to make some purchases; for the wardrobe brought over from France had not been extensive, either for herself or child. Hastily attiring herself, she told Miles she should not be in to dinner, and started.

And so, just as Anthony Castlemaine had once, and but once, set off to walk to the mar-

ket-town, did his poor young wife—nay, his widow—set off now. She was a good walker, and, so far, enjoyed the journey and the sweet spring day. She saw the same objects of interest (or of non-interest, as people might estimate them) that he had seen: the tall, fine trees, now budding into life; the country carts and waggons; the clumsy milestones; the two or three farm houses lying back amid their barns and orchards. Thus she reached Stilborough, and did her commissions.

It was late when she got back to Greylands; five o'clock, and she was dead tired. By the time she reached the Dolphin, she could hardly drag one foot before the other. To walk three miles on a fine day is not much; but to go about afterwards from shop to shop, and then to walk back again is something more. Mrs. Bent, standing at the inn door, saw her, brought her in, and set her down to a substantial tea-table. She told the landlady she had been to Stilborough to make purchases—which would come by the van for her on the morrow, and be left at the Dolphin, if the Dolphin would kindly take them in.

"With pleasure," said Mrs. Bent. "Ned shall take the parcels up to Greylands' Rest."

What with the welcome rest to her tired

limbs, and what with Mrs. Bent's hospitable tea and gossip, Madame Guise sat longer than she had intended. It was nearly dark when she went over to the Nunnery—for she had brought a toy and some bon-bons for Marie. The Grey Sisters received her as kindly as usual; but they told her the little one did not seem very well; and Madame Guise went upstairs to look at her.

Marie was in her little bed by the side of Sister Betsey's. She seemed restless and feverish. Poor Charlotte Guise began to think that perhaps this climate did not agree with her so well as their own. Taking off her things, she sat down to stay with the child.

"Mrs. Castlemaine said it would be quite midnight before they got home, as they were to make a very long day, so I am in no hurry for an hour or two," she observed. "Miles will think I am lost; but I will tell him how it is."

"Has your little one ever had the measles?" asked Sister Mona.

"The measles?" repeated Madame Guise, puzzled for the moment. "Oh, les rougeoles—pardon my forgetfulness—no she has not. She has never had anything."

"Then I think, but I am not sure, that she is sickening for the measles now."

"Mon Dieu!" cried the mother in consternation.

"It is nothing," said the Sister. "We have nursed dozens of children, and brought them well through it. In a week little Marie will be about again."

But Madame Guise, unused to these light ailments, and terribly anxious for her only child, whom she could but look upon, as separated from herself, in the light of a martyr, was not easily reassured. She stayed with the child as long as she dared, and begged that Mr. Parker might be sent for in the morning should Marie be no better.

It was late to go home; after eleven; but nevertheless Charlotte Guise took the lonely road past the Friar's Keep and up Chapel Lane. The way had a fascination for her. Since she had been at Greylands' Rest, in going home from the Nunnery in the evening, she had always chosen it. What she expected to see or hear, that could bear upon her husband's fate, she knew not; but the vague idea ever lay upon her that she might light upon something. Could she have done it without suspicion, three parts of her time

would have been spent pacing about before the chapel ruins, just as John Bent had paced the night he was waiting for his guest.

It was very lonely. All the village had long ago been in bed. The stars were bright; the night was light and clear. Looking over the chapel ruins, she could see the lights of a distant vessel out at sea. Under the hedge, in the very self-same spot where her husband and John Bent had halted that fatal night, did she now halt, and gaze across at the Keep, the Chapel Lane being close upon her left hand.

"No, they could not have been mistaken," ran her thoughts. "If Mr. Castlemaine came down the lane now and crossed over, I should know him unmistakably—and that night was lighter than this, almost like day, for the moon, they say, was never brighter. Then why, unless he were guilty, should Mr. Castlemaine deny that he was there?"

Glancing up at the windows with a shudder, almost fearing she might see the revenant of the Grey Monk pass them with his lamp, or some other revenant, Madame Guise turned up Chapel Lane. At such moments, trifles serve to unstring the nerves of a timorous woman. Sounds struck on Madame Guise's

ear, and she drew back, trembling and shaking, amid the thick grove of shrubs and trees skirting one side of the lane.

"Gently, now; gently, Bess," cried a voice not far from her. "You shall go your own pace in less than five minutes, old girl. Gently now."

And to Charlotte Guise's astonishment, she saw Commodore Teague's spring-cart turn out of the dark turning that led from the Hutt, the Commodore driving. Its cover looked white in the star-light; Bess, the mare he thought so much of, had her best harness on. When nearly abreast of Madame Guise, the Commodore pulled up with an exclamation.

"The devil take it! I've forgot to lock the shed door. Stand still, old girl; stand still, Bess."

He got down and ran back. The well-trained animal stood perfectly still. In a few moments' time he was back again, had mounted, and was driving slowly away in the direction of Newerton.

"What can be taking him abroad at this night hour?" Madame said to herself in wonder.

But the encounter, though it had been a silent one, and on the man's part unsuspected,

had served to restore somewhat of her courage: the proximity of a human being is so re-assuring in the dark and lonely night, when superstitious fancies are running riot. And with a swift step, Charlotte Guise proceeded on her way up Chapel Lane.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OPENING THE BUREAU.

GREYLANDS' CLIFF was a high cliff: and the huts of the fishermen, nestling in nooks on its side, rendered it highly picturesque. Many a lover of art and nature, seeking a subject for his pencil, had sketched this cliff; some few had made it into a grand painting and sent it forth to charm the world.

The two highest cottages on it were of a superior order. Even they were not built on the top; but close under it. They stood nearly side by side; a jutting of rock stretching out between them. The walls were white: and to the side of one of these dwellings—the one nearest the sea—there was a small square piece of sunk level that served now for a little garden. Miss Hallet, to

whom the cottage belonged, had caused some loads of good earth to be brought up; she planted a few flowers, a few shrubs, a few sweet herbs, and so nursed the little spot into a miniature garden. Miss Hallet herself was seated this afternoon just within the open door of the dwelling, darning a rent in a pillow-case. The door opened straight upon this room; a pretty parlour, very well furnished. The kitchen was behind; and two good bed-chambers and a smaller room were above. Not a large house, thinks the reader. No: but it was regarded as large by the poorer dwellers on the cliff, and Miss Hallet was looked up to by them as a lady. Having a small but sufficient income, she lived quietly and peaceably, mixing but little with other people.

Through family misfortunes she had been deprived of a home in early life, and she took a situation, half companion, half lady's-maid. The lady she served bequeathed her by will enough money to live upon. Miss Hallet had then saved money of her own; she came to Greylands, her native place, bought the cottage on the cliff, and settled herself in it. Her brother, like herself, had had to turn to and support himself. He went to sea in the

merchant service, passed in time the examinations before the Board of Trade, and rose to command a vessel trading to the coast of Spain. But he never got beyond that: and one stormy night the unfortunate vessel sunk with himself and all hands. He left two orphan children, a son and daughter, not provided for; Miss Hallet adopted them, and they came home to her at Greylands. The boy, George, she sent to a good school at Stilborough; he had to walk to and fro night and morning: Jane went to the Grey sisters. George took to the sea; in spite of all his aunt could say or do. Perhaps the liking for it was innate, and he was always about in boats and on the beach when at Greylands. He at length put himself on board Tom Dance's boat, and said he would be a fisherman, and nothing else. In vain Miss Hallet pointed out to him that he was superior to anything of the kind, and ought to look out for a higher calling in life. George would not listen. Quitting his aunt's roof—for he grew tired of the continual contentions she provoked—he went to lodge in the village, and made apparently a good living. But the treacherous sea took him, just as it had in like manner taken his father. One night

during a storm, a ship was sighted in distress: Tom Dance, who was as good-hearted as he was reckless, put off in his boat with George Hallet to the rescue, and George never came back again. Handsome, light-hearted, well-mannered George Hallet was drowned. That was nearly two years ago. He was just twenty years of age; and was said to have already been given a share in Tom Dance's earnings. Tom Dance owned his own substantial boat; and his hauls of fish were good; no doubt profitable also, for he was always flush of money. His son, a silent kind of young man, was his partner now, and went out in the boat with him as George Hallet used to do. They lived in one of the cottages on the beach. Old Mrs. Dance, Tom's mother, had her dwelling in a solitary place underneath the perpendicular cliff: not on the village side of it, as the other dwellings were, but facing the sea. It was a lonely spot, inaccessible at times when the tides were high. Tom Dance, who was generous to his mother, and kept her well, would have had her quit it for a more sociably situated habitation: but the old woman was attached to her many-years homestead, and would not listen to him. When we have

grown old in a home, we like it better than any other, no matter what may be its drawbacks.

Miss Hallet finished the darn, and turned the pillow-case about to look for another. She was a tall, fair, angular lady of fifty, with a cold, hard countenance; three or four prim flat curls of grey hair peeped out on her forehead from beneath her cap; tortoiseshell spectacles were stretched across her well-shaped nose. She had a fawn-coloured woollen shawl crossed about her for warmth—for, though a nice spring day, it was hardly the weather yet for one of her age to sit exposed to the open air.

"Why, this must have been cut!"

The spectacles had rested upon an almost imperceptible fray, whose edges were so keen and close as to impart a suspicion that it had never come by natural wear and tear. Miss Hallet drew in her thin lips grimly.

"And since the wash, too!" she continued, when the gaze was over. "Jane must know something of this: she helped the woman to fold. Jane is frightfully heedless."

Threading a fresh needleful of the soft fine darning cotton, she was applying herself to repair the damage, when footsteps were heard

ascending the narrow zigzag path. Another minute, and Tom Dance's son loomed into view : a short, sturdy, well-meaning, but shy and silent youth of twenty.

"Father's duty, Miss Hallet, and he has sent up this fish, if you'd be pleased to accept him," said the young man, showing a good-sized fish with large scales, resting on a wicker-tray. Miss Hallet was charmed. Her hard face relaxed into as much of a smile as it could relax.

"Dear me, what a beautiful fish! How good your father is, Wally! Always thinking of somebody! Give him my best thanks back again. You have just got in, I suppose?"

"Just ten minutes ago," responded Wally. "Been out two tides."

"Well, I wonder your father does not begin to think more of his ease—and so well off as he must be! The night seems the same to him for work as the day."

"One catches the best fish under the moon," shortly remarked the young man, as he handed over the wicker tray.

Miss Hallet took it into the house, and brought it back to him without the fish. Mr. Walter Dance caught the tray with a silent

nod, and sped down the steep path at a rate that, to unaccustomed eyes, might have seemed to put his neck in peril.

Barely had Miss Hallet taken up her sewing again, when another visitor appeared. This one's footsteps were lighter and softer than the young man's, and she was seen almost as soon as heard. A dark-haired, quick-speaking young woman in black. It was Harriet, waiting-maid to Mrs. Castlemaine.

"Is your niece at home, Miss Hallet?"

"No. She's gone to Stilborough. How are you, Harriet?"

"Oh, I'm all right, thank you. What a cliff this is to climb up!—a'most takes one's breath away. Gone to Stilborough, is she? Well, that's a bother!"

"What did you want with her?"

"Has she done any of them han'kerchers, do you know?" returned the young woman, without replying to the direct question.

"I can't say. I know she has begun them. Would you like to come in and sit down?"

"I've no time for sitting down. My missis has sent me off here on the spur of the moment: and when she sends one out on an errand for herself one had best not linger,

you know. Besides, I must get back to dress my ladies."

"Oh must you," indifferently remarked Miss Hallet; who rarely evinced curiosity as to her neighbours' doings, or encouraged gossip upon trifles.

"They are all going off to a dinner party at Stilborough; and missis took it into her head just now that she'd use one of her new fine cambric han'kerchers," continued Harriet. "So she sent me off here to get one."

"But Mrs. Castlemaine is surely not short of fine handkerchiefs!" cried Miss Hallet.

"Short of fine han'kerchers!—why, she's got a drawer full. It was just a freak for a new thing; that's all."

"Well, I do not know whether one is done, Harriet. Jane has been working at one; she was at it last night; but I did not notice whether she finished it."

"Can't you look, please, Miss Hallet?"

Miss Hallet rose from her chair and went up stairs. She came back empty-handed.

"I don't see the handkerchiefs anywhere in Jane's room, Harriet. I dare say she has locked them up in her work-drawer: she has taken to lock up the drawer lately, I've noticed. If you could wait a few minutes

she might be in: she'll not be long now."

"But I can't wait; they start off at five," was the girl's answer: "and the missis and Miss Ethel have both got to be dressed. So I'll say good afternoon, ma'am."

"Good afternoon," repeated Miss Hallet. "Should Jane return in time, if she happens to have finished one of the handkerchiefs, she shall bring it up."

The young woman turned away with a brisk step, but not at the speed Walter Dance had used. By-and-by, quite an hour later, Jane Hallet came in.

A slender, lady-like, nice-looking girl of nineteen; with a fair, soft, gentle face, mild blue eyes, hair light and bright, and almost child-like features. Jane's good looks, of which she was no doubt conscious, and Jane's propensity to dress too much were a source of continual vexation to Miss Hallet: so to say, a stumbling-block in her path. Jane wore a dark blue merino dress, a very pretty grey cloak, with a hood and tassels, and a straw bonnet trimmed with blue. Miss Hallet groaned.

"And you must walk off in all those best things to-day, Jane! Just to go to the wool

shop at Stilborough! I wonder what will become of you!"

"It was so fine a day, aunt," came the cheerful, apologetic answer. "I have not hurt them.

"You've not done them good. Are any of those handkerchiefs of Mrs. Castlemaine's finished?" resumed the aunt, after a pause.

"One is."

"Then you must go up at once with it to Greylands' Rest. Don't take your cloak off —unless, indeed, you'd like to change it for your old one, which would be the right thing to do," added Miss Hallet, snappishly. "And your bonnet, too!"

Jane stood still for a moment, and something like a cloud passed over her face. She did not particularly care to go to Greylands' Rest.

"I am tired with my walk, aunt."

"That can't be helped: you must take the handkerchief all the same," said Miss Hallet. And she explained the reason, and that she had promised to send one if it were done.

"You will be in time, Jane: it is hardly half-past four. The maid said the family were to start at five."

Jane went up to her chamber; a room that

she took care to make look as pretty as she could. A chest of drawers stood by the bed. Taking a key from her pocket, she opened the top long drawer, the only one that was locked, and lifted out the paper of handkerchiefs. Half-a-dozen handkerchiefs of the finest and softest cambric, almost like a spider's web, that Mrs. Castlemaine had given to her to hem-stitch.

Any little job of this kind Jane Hallet was glad to undertake. The money helped to buy her clothes. Otherwise she was entirely dependent upon her aunt. The Grey Ladies had taught her all kinds of fine needlework. When she had none of that to do—and she did not have it often—she filled up her leisure time in knitting lambs' wool socks for a shop at Stilborough. There was no necessity for her to do this, and Miss Hallet did not cordially approve of it; but it gave Jane a feeling of independency.

Snatching a moment to look in the glass and put her hair in order, Jane went down with the handkerchief, neatly folded in thin white paper. All the girl's instincts were nice: she was in fact too much of a lady for her position.

"I thought you might be changing those

smart things for your every-day ones," crossly spoke Miss Hallet, as Jane went through the sitting-room. "Mrs. Castlemaine will look askance at your finery."

"There was no time for it, aunt," replied Jane, a sudden blush dyeing her face, as she hastened out.

She ran down the cliff, went past the Grey Nunnery, and so up Chapel Lane—which was the back way to Greylands' Rest, and not the front. It was not her wish or intention to see Mrs. Castlemaine, if she could avoid it; or any of the family. Presenting herself at the back door, she asked for Harriet. One of the other servants took her into a small parlour, and said she would tell the lady's maid. Five o'clock had struck before Harriet bustled in.

"The han'kercher, is it? Mrs. Castlemaine 'll be glad. When she sets her mind on a thing, she do set it. Come along, Jane Hallet, she wants to see you."

No opportunity was afforded to Jane of saying no, and she followed Harriet along the passages. Mrs. Castlemaine, her rich black silk dinner dress covered by a large warm shawl, stood in the hall. Ethel Reene, in black net and white ribbons, and wearing her

scarlet cloak, was also there. The carriage waited outside. Jane went forward shrinkingly, her face turning pale and red alternately.

"I just want to see it before I take it," said Mrs. Castlemaine, holding out her hand for the handkerchief. "Is it tumbled much? Oh, I see; it is very nice, quite smooth. How well you have kept it, Jane Hallet! Here, Harriet, I don't want this one now."

She tossed back an embroidered handkerchief to the maid, and swept out to the carriage. Ethel smiled at Jane, as she followed her stepmother.

"I'm sure it is very good of you, Jane, to come up with it for mamma," she said, feeling in her sensitive heart that Mrs. Castlemaine had not given one word of thanks to the girl.

Mr. Castlemaine came downstairs, an overcoat on his arm. He nodded kindly to Jane as he passed, and inquired after Miss Hallet. Miles and Harriet stood in the porch, watching the carriage away. Jane was a little behind, just within the hall.

"I thought Mr. Harry was going," observed Harriet. "What has took him not to go?"

"Don't know," said Miles. "One never

can be certain of Mr. Harry—whether he goes to a place or whether he doesn't go."

"Perhaps he has walked on," remarked Harriet carelessly, as she turned round. "I say, Jane Hallet, you'll stay and take a dish o' tea, now you are here. We are just going to have it."

But Jane hastily declined. No persuasion, apparently, would induce her to accept the invitation; and she departed at once. Half an hour later Madame Guise and her pupil came home: they had been out for a long walk.

"Have they all gone?" inquired Madame of one of the housemaids.

"Oh, dear, yes, ma'am. Half an hour ago."

Now, this answer deceived Charlotte Guise. She knew the dinner engagement had been accepted by Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine, their son, and Ethel. She had no thought or idea but what they would collectively keep it: and in saying to the servant "Have they all gone," she comprised the four, and understood that she was answered accordingly.

She and Flora took tea together. The child was growing somewhat more tractable than she used to be. Not much as yet; it

was just a little shade of improvement. Flora was always better when her mamma was away; and Madame Guise had no trouble with her on this night. She even went to bed at the appointed hour, eight o'clock, without rebellion, after a regalement of what she was particularly fond of—bread and jam.

"I will take a slice of this bread and butter and jam also," remarked Madame to Miles; "and then I shall not trouble you to bring in supper for me. It will be a nice change. We like this confiture much in my country."

So Madame took her light supper that evening with Flora, and afterwards wrote a letter. At nine o'clock she rang the bell to say she was going up to her room for the night, feeling tired, and should require nothing more. Miles, who had answered the bell, saw her go up with her candle. He put out the sitting-room lights for safety, and went back to the kitchen. His master and mistress were not expected home before half-past eleven.

In her room stood Charlotte Guise, white as a sheet. She was contemplating a deed that night, from which, in spite of what she deemed her justification for it, she shrank in horror. It was no less a step than the open-

ing with a false key the private bureau of Mr. Castlemaine.

Some little time, the best part of a fortnight, had elapsed since that walk of hers to Stilborough; and Marie had had the measles—"very kindly," as Mr. Parker and the Grey Sisters expressed it—and was well again. Telling a plausible story of the loss of her keys to a Stilborough locksmith that day, Madame had obtained from him a key that would undo, if necessary, half the locks in Mr. Castlemaine's house. No opportunity had presented itself for using it until now. Such an occasion as this, when the house was deserted by all, save the servants, might not speedily occur again.

She stood in her chamber, trembling and nervous, the light from the candle reflected on her face. The staircase clock struck the quarter past nine, and her heart beat faster as she heard it. It was the signal she had been waiting for.

For the servants would now be settled at their supper, and were not likely soon to get up from it. Nine o'clock was the nominal hour for the meal: but, as she chanced to know, they rarely sat down to it much before a quarter past. With the house free and no-

thing to do, they would not hurry themselves over it to-night. Half an hour—nay, an hour, she knew she might freely reckon upon while they were shut up at table in the comfortable kitchen, talking and eating.

Charlotte Guise opened the door and stood to listen. Not a sound save the ticking of the clock broke the stillness. She was quite alone. Flora was fast asleep in her room in the front corridor, next to Mrs. Castlemaine's chamber, for she had been in to see, and she had taken the precaution of turning the key on the child for safety : it would not do to be interrupted by *her*. Yet another minute she stood listening, candle in hand. Then, swiftly crossing the corridor, she stole into the study through the double doors. A fear had been upon her that she might find the second door a stumbling-block, as Mr. Castlemaine sometimes locked it when he went abroad. It was open to-night, and she whisked through it.

The same orderly, unlittered room that she had seen before. No papers lay about, no deeds were left out that could be of use to her. Three books were stacked upon the side table ; a newspaper lay on a chair ; and that was positively all. The fire had long

ago gone out; on the mantel-piece was a box of matches.

Putting down the candle, Charlotte Guise took out her key, and tried the bureau. It opened at once. She swung back the heavy lid and waited a moment to recover herself: her lips were white, her breath came in gasps. Oh, apart from the baseness, the dishonour of the act, which was very present to her mind, what if she were to be caught at it?

Papers were there en masse. The drawers and pigeon-holes seemed to be full of them. So far as she could judge from a short examination—and she did not dare to give a long one—these papers had reference to business transactions, to sales of goods and commercial matters—which she rather wondered at, but did not understand. But of deeds she could see none.

What did Charlotte Guise expect to find? What did she promise herself by this secret search? In truth, she could not have told. She wanted to get some record of her husband's fate, some proof that should compromise the Master of Greylands. She would also have been glad to find some will, or deed of gift, that should show to her how Greylands' Rest had been really left by old

Anthony Castlemaine: whether to his son Basil or to James. If to Basil, why there would be a proof—as she, poor thing, deemed it—of the manner in which James Castlemaine had dealt with his nephew, and its urging motive.

No, there was nothing. Opening this bundle of papers, rapidly glancing into that, turning over the other, she could find absolutely nothing to help her: and in the revulsion of feeling which the disappointment caused, she said to herself how worse than foolish she had been to expect to find anything: how utterly devoid of reason she must be, to suppose Mr. Castlemaine would preserve mementos of an affair so dangerous. And where he kept his law papers, or parchments relating to his estate, she could not tell, but certainly they were not in the bureau, unless there were secret receptacles to which she knew not how to penetrate.

Not daring to stay longer, for near upon half an hour must have elapsed, she replaced the things as she had found them, so far as she could remember. All was done save one drawer; a small drawer, at the foot, next the slab. It had but a few receipted bills in it: there was one from a saddler, one from a

coach-maker, and such like. The drawer was very shallow ; and, in closing it, the bills were forced out again. Charlotte Guise, in her trepidation and hurry, pulled the drawer forwards too forcibly, and pulled it out of its frame.

Had it chanced by accident—this little contretemps ? Ah, no. When do these strange trifles, pregnant with events of moment, occur by chance ? At the top of the drawer itself, *in* the drawer, appeared a narrow, closed compartment, opening with a slide. Charlotte drew the slide back, and saw within it a folded letter and some small article wrapped in paper.

The letter, which she opened and read, proved to be the one written by Basil Castlemaine on his death-bed—the same letter that had been brought over by young Anthony, and given to his uncle. There was nothing much to note in it—save that Basil assumed throughout it that the estate was his, and would be his son's after him. Folding it again, she opened the bit of paper ; and there shone out a diamond ring that flashed in the candle's rays.

Charlotte Guise took it up and let it fall again. Let it fall in a kind of sick horror,

and staggered to a chair and sat down half fainting. For it was her husband's ring.

The ring that Anthony had worn always on his left-hand little finger; the ring that he had on when he quitted Gap. It was the same ring that John Bent and his wife had often noticed and admired; the ring that was undoubtedly on his hand when he followed Mr. Castlemaine that ill-fated night into the Friar's Keep. His poor wife recognized it instantly: she knew it by its peculiar setting.

To her mind it was proof indisputable that he had indeed been put out of the way for ever. Mr. Castlemaine must have possessed himself of the ring, unwilling that so valuable a jewel should be lost: perhaps had drawn it from Anthony's finger after death. She shuddered at the thought. But, in the midst of her distress, reason told her that this was only a negative proof, after all; not sufficient for her to act upon, to charge Mr. Castlemaine with the murder.

When somewhat recovered, she kissed the ring, and put it back into the small compartment with the letter. Pushing in the slide, she shut the drawer, and closed and locked the bureau; thus leaving all things as she had found them. Not very much result had

been gained, it is true, but enough to spur her onwards on her future search. With her mind in a chaos of tumult,—with her brain in a whirl of pain,—with every vein throbbing and fevered, she left the candle on the ground where she had now lodged it, and went to the window, gasping for air.

The night was bright with stars; opposite to her, and seemingly at no distance at all, rose that dark building, the Friar's Keep. As she stood with her eyes strained upon it, though in reality not seeing it but deep in inward thought, there suddenly shone a faint light at one of its casements. Her attention was awakened now; her heart began to throb.

The faint light grew brighter: and she distinctly saw a form in a monk's habit, the cowl drawn over his head, slowly pass the window; the light seeming to come from a lamp in his out-stretched hand. All the superstitious tales she had heard of the place rushed into her mind: this must be the apparition of the Grey Friar. Charlotte Guise had an awful dread of revenants, and she turned sick and faint.

With a cry, only half suppressed, bursting from her parted lips, she caught up the candle,

afraid to stay, and flew through the door into the narrow passage. The outer door was opening to her hand, when the voice of Harry Castlemaine was heard in the corridor, almost close to the door.

Ah, far more sick and faint did she turn now! Discovery seemed inevitable. Instinct led her to blow out the light and to push the door as close as she could push it. She dared not shut it: he might have heard the click of the latch. Had the others come home? Was Mr. Castlemaine ascending to his study to catch her there? Trembling, shaking, panting, the unhappy lady stood in this acme of terror, the ghost of the Friar's Keep behind her, the dread of detection before her. And the candle was making a dreadful smell!

That alone might betray her: Harry Castlemaine might push back the door to ascertain where the smell came from. Could the floor have opened and disclosed a yawning pit, the unhappy lady would thankfully have disappeared within it.

The minute seemed like an hour. Harry did not come on. He appeared to have halted close by to listen to something. Miles was speaking below.

"Thought I had gone with them to the dinner, and so put out the lights!" retorted Harry, in his free, clear, good-natured tones. "You saw the carriage drive away, I suppose, without me. Well, light up again, and bring in some supper."

He came on now, and went into his chamber at the end of the corridor. Staying there a minute or two, as though changing his coat, he passed back, and went down stairs again. Charlotte Guise, shaking in every limb, stole out as the echo of his footsteps died away, closed the door, and took refuge in her own room. There she went into hysterics: hysterics that she was totally unable to suppress, and muffled her head in a blanket to deaden the cry.

The next morning there was commotion in the house: Miss Flora Castlemaine had found herself locked in her bedroom. Given to take impromptu excursions in a morning en robe de nuit, after books, or the kitten, or into somebody's bedroom who was sure not to want her, the young lady for once found herself caged. Mrs. Castlemaine made an angry stir about it: locked doors were so dangerous in case of fire, she said. She accused the

maid, Eliza, who attended on Miss Flora, and threatened her with dismissal.

"I can be upon my Bible oath that I never locked the door," cried the girl. "Why should I wish to lock it last night, more than any other night? I never touched the key. For the matter of that, I could not tell whether the key was outside or inside. You may send me away this hour, ma'am, but I am innocent, and I can't say more than that."

Poor Madame Guise, who was complaining of migraine this morning, and whose eyes were red and heavy, took the blame upon herself, to exculpate the wrongfully-accused servant. In her terror of the previous night, she had totally forgotten to unlock Flora's door. She hastened now to say that she had looked in on the sleeping child when she herself went up to bed: in coming out, it was possible she had turned the key. Many of the chamber doors in France shut and opened with the key only: she might have turned this key unthinkingly, meaning but to shut the door.

So the matter ended. But Charlotte Guise could not help feeling how painfully one deceit, one wrong act, leads to another. And Mr. Harry, she found, had never been to the

dinner at all. Some matter of business, or perhaps some whim, had led him to break his engagement, and to give due notice of it the day beforehand to the entertainers. As Miles had observed, one never could be certain of Harry Castlemaine.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE GREY MONK.

THAT the Grey Monk was haunting the Friar's Keep that night, and for a longer period than could be quite agreeable to any chance passer-by, appeared to be indisputable.

Some of the Grey Sisters were up that evening at the coastguard station. The wife of one of the men was very ill, her infant being only three days old: and Sister Rachel had been with her for the day. At eight o'clock Sister Rachel was relieved by Sister Mona, who would remain for the night. Sister Ann walked up from the Nunnery with Sister Mona for company, and would walk back again with Sister Rachel.

It was about half past eight that they left the station to return home, the Sisters Ann

and Rachel. The night was starlight, the air somewhat frosty. Talking of the poor woman, just quitted, Sister Rachel saying the fever was getting higher, they approached the Friar's Keep. They were on the opposite side of the road, and had nearly reached Chapel Lane when something strange—some kind of glimmer or faint flash—struck on Sister Rachel's vision, and caused her to turn her eyes on the upper casements of the Keep. With a spring and a cry, she seized hold of Sister Ann, and clung to her.

"Have you trod upon a stone?" asked practical Sister Ann. But the very fact of turning to her companion, who was outside, brought the windows of the Keep before her, and she saw the Grey Monk slowly gliding along, with his cowl covering his head and his lamp in his hand. A shadowy kind of form, suggestive of terrible ideas that don't pertain to earth.

The blood of the two unfortunate Sisters seemed to turn; they nearly sank away in evaporation. They clung to each other, arm in arm, hand to hand, pushing, staggering, pressing onwards, and in a minute, as it seemed, gained the Grey Nunnery. The

door was opened by Sister Caroline, and they burst into the reception parlour.

The Superior sat there, Mary Ursula; and most of the sisters with her who were not out on charitable missions. To have stopped the tongues of the two terrified grey women would have been about as feasible as to stem a rushing torrent in its overwhelming course. They had seen the apparition of the Grey Monk gliding past the window with their own eyes; had seen his lamp; had nearly fainted at him altogether.

"Tut, tut, tut!" reproved Sister Mildred, who was better this evening and down stairs. "I think you must have been deceived by your fears. *I* never saw it in my life."

But they only told their tale the more persistently, and Sister Mildred wavered. In vain Mary Ursula represented to them that there were no such things as ghosts: that people, in believing in them, were misled by their fears and fancies. To this the two scared women only reiterated that they *saw* it. They were walking quietly along, talking of the poor sick wife of the coastguardsman; nothing could have been further from their thoughts than any fears or fancies, when the

figure suddenly appeared, plainly and unmistakably, before their astonished eyes.

"Sister Rachel saw it first," urged Sister Ann, anxious to defend herself against the imputation of having taken alarm unnecessarily, as though she were a foolish, timid child. "When she called out and caught hold of my arm, I thought she had trod upon a stone, or twisted her foot, or something; and, in turning to her, there I saw the pale light in the window, and the figure of the Grey Monk. We stood rooted to the spot, holding on to one another, just too frightened to move, our poor eyes staring at the Keep. He glided past that window, and then past the other, his lighted lamp stretched out in his hand; just as Sister Lettice once saw him glide a year or so ago—and she knows it.

Sister Lettice, a simple woman, great in pudding-making, who had stood listening with round, frightened eyes, murmured her confirmation. One night, when she was belated, having been to a farm-house where sickness reigned, she had seen it exactly as the two sisters were describing it now; and had come home and fainted.

"I was beginning to forget my fright," said

Sister Lettice, looking pleadingly at the two superiors. "But since the late talk there has been about that poor Mr. Anthony Castlemaine, I've not dared to go out of doors at night alone. For the ghost has been seen more frequently since he disappeared: in fact, as the ladies know, it's said by some that it is the young man's spirit that comes now, not the Grey Friar's."

"It was the Grey Friar we saw to-night, let people say what they will," rejoined Sister Ann.

The talking continued. This was a great event in the monotonous existence of the Grey ladies: and the two unfortunate Sisters were shaking still. Mary Ursula withdrew quietly from the room, and went up to her chamber with a cloud on her brow. There she put on the grey cloak and bonnet of the order, came down again, and let herself out at the front door.

There was something in all this gossip that disturbed and distressed Mary Ursula. Anthony's fate, and the uncertainty connected with it, was more often in her mind than she would have cared to tell. Like Charlotte Guise, she—what with dwelling on it and listening to the superstitious surmises in

Greylands—had grown to think that the Friar's Keep did contain some mystery not yet unsolved. As to "ghosts," Mary Castlemaine's sound good sense utterly repudiated all belief in such. What, then, she naturally asked herself, was this figure, that took the appearance of the traditional Grey Monk, and showed itself at the windows of the Keep, lamp in hand? Had it anything to do with the disappearance of Anthony?

Obeying an irresistible impulse, she was going forth to-night to look at this said apparition herself—if, indeed, it would appear again and so allow itself to be looked at. It was perhaps a foolish thing to do; but she wanted to see with her own unprejudiced eyes what and whom it was like. With her whole heart she wished the occurrences of that past February night and the mysteries of the Friar's Keep—did it in truth contain any—were thrown open to the light of day: it might tend to clear what was dark—to clear her uncle from the silent suspicions attaching to him. It was of course his place to institute this search, but he did not do it. Encasing himself in his pride, his haughty indifference, Mary supposed he was content to let the matter alone until it righted itself. But she loved

her uncle and was painfully jealous for his good name.

Turning swiftly out of the gate of the Nunnery, she went up the hill, passed the Chapel Ruins, crossed the road, and stood still to gaze at the Friar's Keep. The church clock was striking nine. Taking up her position under the hedge, in almost the self-same spot where John Bent and Anthony Castlemaine had taken theirs that unlucky night, she fixed her eyes on the windows, and waited. The old building, partly in ruins, looked grey and grim enough. Sometimes the moon lighted it up; but there was no moon to night. The stars were bright, the atmosphere was clear.

The minutes, as they went by, seemed like hours. Mary Ursula had not much more patience than other people, and it was exhausting itself rapidly. Not a shadow of a sign was there of the Grey Monk or of any other appearance. To judge by its silence and its lonely look, one might have said the Keep had not been entered since the Grey Monk was alive.

"It is hardly to be supposed it would show itself twice in one night," breathed Mary in a spirit that was somewhat of a mocking one.

But in that she was mistaken: and she went away too soon.

At the end of a quarter of an hour—which had seemed to her like two quarters—she gave it up. Crossing the road to the chapel gate, she went in, traversed the ruins to the opposite corner to the Friar's Keep, and stood looking out to sea. Mary had another vexation on her mind that night: earlier in the day a report had reached her in a letter that her recreant lover, William Blake-Gordon, was engaged again. So soon!—so soon! Whether it was true, she knew not: it could not, either way, make much difference to the pain that filled her heart: but the report wrung it cruelly. The other name, mentioned in connection with his, was Agatha Mountsorrel's; her own close friend of former days. She knew that she ought not to feel this bitter pain, this wild jealousy; that, once he was lost to her, she should have put him out of her mind for good. Ah, it is all very well for the wise to lay down laws, to say this is wrong and the other is right and you must act accordingly! human nature is but frail, and the heart must be true to itself.

Some slight movement caught her attention below. It was low water, and the strip of

beach underneath was free. Mary leaned over to look. But she could not see: the shelving-out rocks hid the path as she stood. In the deep silence of the night, she thought she could distinguish whispering voices: and she waited until their owners should have passed a little farther on, where a bend inward of the rocks allowed a view to be obtained.

It brought the greatest vexation of all! A tall fine form came into sight; too tall, too fine, to be any but Harry Castlemaine's. His arm was around the waist of some young girl; his head was turned to her, and they were conversing eagerly. She wore a dark cloak, its hood drawn up over her head: Mary could not see her face, for their backs were towards her, but she fancied it was Jane Hallet. They passed away under the Nunnery, as if returning to the village, and were lost to sight and hearing. Only at quite low water was that narrow strip passable.

The heaving sea stretched itself out before her eyes; the dead of the past ages were mouldering away beneath her feet; the canopy of sky, studded with stars in its vast expanse, lay above her head. But for all these signs, and the thoughts they involved, Mary Ursula Castlemaine might in that moment have lost

heart and courage. The by-ways of life seemed very crooked just then; its troubles pregnant with perplexity and pain. But God was over all. The turbulent waves were held in check by His Hand; the long-ago dead had been called by Him; the sky and the stars were but emblems of His power. Yes, He was over all. From His throne in Heaven He looked down on the world; on its cares, its trials, its weaknesses, its temptations and sins; over-ruling all according to His will. He could set things straight; He was full of compassion, long suffering, and mercy. The dark troubles here would be merged in a bright hereafter: in a place where there should be no cankering heart-break, where sorrow and suffering should flee away. A few more years, and——

"Dear me, ma'am! I beg your pardon."

Mary Ursula, buried in her far-off thoughts in the solitary place, was startled at the address, and turned round with a slight cry. Close at her elbow stood John Bent; a small basket in his hand, covered with a white cloth.

"I'm sure I frightened you, ma'am!"

"Just for the moment you did," she said, with her sweet smile, interrupting his further

apologies. "I was standing to take a look at the sea. How grand it is from this spot!"

John Bent agreed that it was grand, and proceeded to explain his presence. His wife had despatched him with some broth and other trifles that might be acceptable to the sick woman up at the coastguard station. In passing the chapel ruins on his way thither, he had caught sight of some one standing at the edge of the cliff, and turned in at once to see who it was.

"No wonder you did not hear me, ma'am, for I crept up on tiptoe," he acknowledged. "Since the disappearance of Mr. Anthony Castlemaine, this place is just as though it haunted me, for it is never out of my mind. To see somebody standing here in the shade of the corner wall gave me a turn. I could not imagine who it was, and meant to pounce upon 'em."

"The place lies on my mind also," said Mary Ursula. "I wish the doings of that night could be brought to light."

The landlord shook his head. She could not wish it as he wished it.

"I don't think now it ever will be," he said. "At least, I often fear it will not. There is only one person, as I believe, who

could throw light upon it; and it does not seem to be his pleasure to speak."

She knew that he alluded to her uncle: and she seized on the moment for speaking a few words that she had long wished to speak to John Bent. In spite of the opinion he held, and that she knew he held, in regard to that past night, she respected the man greatly: she remembered how much her father had respected him.

"I cannot be ignorant, Mr. Bent, of the stigma you would cast on Mr. Castlemaine: the suspicion, I would rather say, lying in your mind against him. I believe that nothing can be more unjust: nothing more inconsistent with the true facts, could they be disclosed."

John Bent was silent. She stood close in the corner, within the shade cast by the slanting bit of stone wall, the blank side wall of the Grey Nunnery towering close above her. John was so near as almost to touch her. The sea was before them, a light twinkling on it here and there in the distance from some fishing vessel; the grass-grown square, once the site of the chapel, with its dottings of low crumbling walls, lay to their left, and beyond it was the Friar's Keep, its gothic door

pushed to as usual. A lonely spot altogether it was to stand in, in the silence of the spring night.

"Why should you cherish this suspicion?" she asked.

John Bent tilted his hat slightly up on one side, and slowly rubbed his head. He was a very honest-minded, straightforward man; and though he might on occasion find it inexpedient to avow the truth, he yet would not, even by implication, speak an untruth; or tacitly let one be inferred.

"It is a subject, ma'am, on which my mouth ought to be closed to you."

"Not at all," she answered. "Were I Mr. Castlemaine's wife or daughter you might urge that. I am his niece, it is true; but I have now in a manner withdrawn myself from the world, and——But I will leave that argument and go to another. For my own sake, I wish you to speak openly with me. These troubles lie on my mind; sometimes I cannot sleep for thinking of them."

"I am sure I can't sleep for them," said John.

"And I think that steps should be taken to put the doubts to flight—if we only knew what steps they could be."

John stooped to lodge the basket on the low top of the grass-grown cliff, jutting upwards before him. But he did not answer.

"Believe me when I say that no thought of reproach on you for entertaining these opinions rests on my mind," proceeded Miss Castlemaine. "I am sure that you conscientiously hold them; that you cannot divest yourself of them; and—"

"I wish I didn't," interposed John. "I only wish I had no cause to."

"There is no cause," she said in a low tone; "no true one. I am as sure of it as that I stand here. Even had it been Mr. Castlemaine whom you saw come in here that night, I feel sure his presence could have been explained away. But I think you must have been mistaken. You have no confirmation that it was he: nay, the confirmation lies rather the other way—that he was not here. Considering all this, I think you ought not to persist in your opinion, Mr. Bent; or to let the world believe you persist in it."

"As I have said before, madam, this is a matter that I don't care to talk to you upon."

"But I wish you to talk to me. I ask you to talk to me. You may see that I speak to you confidentially—do you so speak to me.

There is no one else I would thus talk with about it, save you."

"Madam, it's just this—not but what I feel the honour you do me, and thank you for it; and goodness knows what honour I hold and have always held you in, Miss Castlemaine!—But it's this, ma'am: your opinion lies one way and mine the other: and while I would not insist to *you* that Mr. Castlemaine was guilty, I yet can't let myself say he was not."

"I am as fully persuaded he was not as that those stars are above us," she said. But John made no reply.

"Mr. Anthony was made away with, madam. I——"

"No, no," she interrupted with a shiver.

"I don't accuse Mr. Castlemaine of having done it," proceeded John. "What I say, and hold to, is this, ma'am: that Mr. Castlemaine must know something of what became of him. But he does not avow it; he keeps silence: and it is that silence that strengthens the suspicions against him. I saw him come in here that night just as surely as I see you here now, Miss Castlemaine. It's true I did not see him so clearly go into the Friar's Keep; these mouldering walls, sticking up here and

there a foot or two from the earth, dodge one's eyesight: still I saw the shade of him, like, go in: and in less than a minute my attention was called off Mr. Castlemaine by Mr. Anthony's own movements. I saw *him* go into the Keep: he made for it straight."

"But I say that the person you saw may not have been Mr. Castlemaine," she urged again, having quietly heard him to the end.

"What other man is there in Greylands, ma'am, of the height and bearing of Mr. Castlemaine—one with the bold, free, upright walk and the gentleman's dress?" returned the landlord. "Only Mr. Harry: and Mr. Harry is too young and slender to be mistaken for his father even in the moonlight. Mr. Harry happened to be away that night at Newerton."

"I think you are cruelly, persistently obstinate. Forgive me, Mr. Bent; I do not wish or intend to hurt your feelings," she added in a gentle, even kind tone. "It seems to me that you must have some animus against Mr. Castlemaine."

"The poor young gentleman was living under my roof, madam. I went forth with him that night, halted with him opposite this very gate, and watched him in. It has sat on

my mind always since that I am in a manner accountable for him—that it lies with me to find out what became of him."

"I can understand the feeling and appreciate it," she answered quickly. "In itself it is a good and right feeling; but I think that its very intensity tends to mislead you, and to cause this animosity against Mr. Castlemaine. The person you saw come in here may have been a stranger: you have had no confirmation of any kind that it was Mr. Castlemaine: and the eyesight at night is so deceptive."

"Yes I have," said John, dropping his voice to a whisper, and speaking with evident reluctance. "I have had confirmation. Madam, you make me speak against my better will."

"You allude to Anthony," she rejoined somewhat impatiently. "You have said, I know, that he likewise thought it was his uncle—as indeed seems proved by the fact of his following him in. But, it may be that he was only led to think so by some exclamation of yours; that he did not see with his own eyes. He is not here to prove it, one way or the other. In thus pressing my view of the case, I am only anxious that the fair

truth should be established," she resumed after an instant's pause, as though she would explain her own persistency. "I am not wishing to mislead or bias you."

"We both saw him, ma'am, we both saw plainly that it was Mr. Castlemaine; but I did not allude to Mr. Anthony," spoke John, in the same subdued tone. "It has been confirmed by another."

"By whom?" she asked, drawing her cloak together with a sharp movement as though she were cold. "Do not hesitate; tell me all. I have said that I regard this as a confidential interview."

And perhaps John Bent, after what had passed, could find no plea of refusal. He was a very persuadable man when either his good sense or his good feeling was appealed to. As Mrs. Bent was wont to tell him, he had a soft place in his heart.

"Up to last night that ever was, ma'am, I had no idea that Mr. Castlemaine had been seen by any but us. But I find he was. I'll tell you what I've heard. You will perhaps think the evidence not worth much, Miss Castlemaine, for the man who saw him was three parts tipsy at the time: but he must have had his wits about him, for all that.'

To make plain to the reader what the landlord was about to relate, we must go back to the previous evening. On that evening at twilight, John Bent sauntered over to the beach, and sat down on the bench to smoke his pipe. It was a fine, still evening, favourable for the fishing-boats. While he was smoking peaceably, and gazing at the stars, beginning to show themselves in the sky, Jack Tuff, the sailor, strolled up, gave the landlord the good evening, and took his seat on the same bench. He produced his pipe, evidently wanting to smoke; but he, just as evidently, had no tobacco. John handed him some, and allowed him to light the pipe by his own. Talking of this and that, they somehow got upon the subject of Anthony Castlemaine's disappearance: and Mr. Tuff, perhaps out of gratitude for the good tobacco, avowed to his astonished companion that he could have confirmed his evidence, had he chosen, as to it having been Mr. Castlemaine who had crossed the road to the chapel ruins that fatal February night.

According to Mr. Jack Tuff's account, his own movements that night had been as follows. He had walked over to the little fishing hamlet, Beeton, and taken a glass with a

comrade there. It might have been two glasses. At any rate, it was enough to make Jack wish to pay another social visit as he went back to Greylands, instead of going straight home. In one of the three cottages situate at the back of Greylands' Rest, there lodged a sailor friend of Jack's: and accordingly Jack turned up Chapel Lane—the nearest way from where he then was—to make the call. There he stayed until late, taking other glasses, very late indeed for the quiet village; and he turned out considerably after eleven o'clock with unsteady legs. He staggered down Chapel Lane pretty safely until he neared the other end of it. When opposite the turning to the Hutt, who should emerge from that turning but some tall man. At the moment, Jack Tuff happened to be holding on with one arm to a tree trunk, to steady himself: but he made it out to be Mr. Castlemaine, and attempted to pull his old round hat off in token of respect. He did not know whether Mr. Castlemaine saw him; but fancied he did not see him. Mr. Castlemaine went up the lane towards his home, and Jack Tuff went on down it.

So far, that might be regarded as a corroboration of the Master of Greylands' state-

ment at the time—namely, that he had left the Hutt about half-past eleven after smoking a pipe with the Commodore: and the probability seemed to be that Mr. Castlemaine had not seen Jack Tuff, or he might have called on him to confirm his testimony as to the hour.

Jack Tuff continued his progress down the small remaining portion of the lane, trying all the while to put on his hat: which he had succeeded in getting off at last. Something was undoubtedly the matter with either the head or the hat; for the hat would not go on the head, or the head into the hat. A branch of a tree, or something, caught Jack's elbow, and the hat dropped; Jack, in stooping for it, dropped also; and there he was, sitting amid the trunks of trees on the side of the lane, his back propped against one of them and his hat nowhere.

How long Jack remained there he did not pretend to say. His impression was that he fell asleep; but whether that was so, or not, Jack could not have told had he been bribed with a golden sovereign. At any rate, the next thing he heard or remembered, was, that some steps were coming down the lane. Jack

looked up, and saw they were those of the Master of Greylands.

"Are you sure it was him?" interrupted John Bent, at this point of the narration, edging a little bit nearer to Jack on the bench.

"In course I'm sure," replied Jack Tuff. "The moonlight shone full upon him through the leafless branches of the trees, and I saw him plain. He didn't see me that time, for sure. I was in the dark, back amid the clump o' trees; and he went along with his head and eyes straight afore him to the end o' the lane."

"And where did he go then?"

"Don't know. He didn't come back again. Suppose he was crossing over to the Keep."

"Well, go on," said John.

There was not much more to tell. After this incident, the passing of the Master of Greylands, Mr. Tuff bethought himself that he might as well be getting homewards. To make a start, however, was not easy of accomplishment. First he had to find his hat, which took up some considerable time: it was only when he had given it up for lost that he became conscious it was doubled up under him as he sat. Next he had to pull out his match-box and light his pipe: and that also took

time. Lastly he had to get upon his legs, a work requiring skill, but accomplished by the friendly aid of the trees. Altogether from a quarter to half an hour must have been used in the process. Once fairly started and clear of the lane, he came upon Mr. Bent, pacing about opposite the ruins and waiting for Mr. Anthony Castlemaine.

"Did you hear the pistol-shot?" asked John Bent when the recital was over.

"Never heard it at all," said Jack Tuff. "I must have been feeling for my hat."

"And why did you not say at the time that you saw the Master of Greylands—and so have borne out my story?" demanded John Bent as a final question.

"I dare say!" retorted Jack Tuff: "and be laughed at for an imbecile who was drunk and saw double! Nobody 'ud believe me. I'm not a going to say it now, Mr. Bent, except to you. I'm not a going to draw down Mr. Castlemaine upon me, and perhaps get put away in gaol."

And this was all John Bent got from him. That the man spoke the strict truth according to his belief—namely, that it was Mr. Castlemaine he saw both times that night—John could have staked his life upon. But that

the man was equally determined not to say so much to the world, fearing the displeasure of Mr. Castlemaine: nay, that he probably would deny it in toto if the world questioned him, the landlord was equally sure of.

Miss Castlemaine heard the narrative in silence. It did not shake her belief in the innocence of her uncle; but it made it more difficult to confute John Bent, and she was now sorry to have spoken to him at all. With a deep sigh she turned to depart.

"We can only wait the elucidation that time will bring," she said to the landlord. "Rely upon it that if any ill deed was done that night, Mr. Castlemaine had no hand in it."

John Bent maintained a respectful silence. They crossed the ruins, and he held open the gate for her to pass through. Just then she remembered another topic, and spoke of it.

"What is it that appears at the casements here, in the guise of a Grey Friar? Two of the Sisters have been alarmed by it to-night."

"Something like a dozen people have been scared by it lately," said John. "As to what it is, ma'am, *I* don't know. Senseless idiots,

to be frightened! as if a ghost could harm us! I should like to see it appear to *me!*"

With this answer, betraying not only his superiority to the Greylands world in general, but his inward bravery, and a mutual good-night, they parted. John going up the hill with his basket; Miss Castlemaine turning towards the Nunnery, and pondering deeply.

Strange, perhaps, to say, considering the state Jack Tuff was avowedly in that eventful night, a conviction that his sight had not deceived him, had taken hold of her. That some mystery did attach to that night, independent of the disappearance of Anthony, she had always fancied: and this evidence only served to confirm it. Many a time the thought had arisen in her mind, but only to be driven back again, that her uncle was not as open in regard to that night's doings as he ought to be. Had it been possible that such an accusation, such a suspicion, whether openly made or only implied, had been brought against herself, she should have stood boldly forth to confront her accusers and assert her innocence, have taken Heaven to witness to it, if needs were. He had not done this; he had never spoken of it voluntarily, good or bad:

in short, he shunned the subject—and it left an unsatisfactory impression. What should Mr. Castlemaine want in the chapel ruins at that midnight hour?—what could he want? But if it was he who went in, why did he deny it? Put it that it was really Mr. Castlemaine, why then the inference was that he must know what became of Anthony. It seemed very strange altogether; a curious, unaccountable, mysterious affair. Mary felt it to be so. Not that she lost an iota of faith in her uncle; she seemed to trust him as she would have trusted her father; but her mind was troubled, her brain was in a chaos of confusion.

In some such confusion as she stepped bodily into a minute later. At the gate of the Nunnery she found herself in the midst of a small crowd, a small excited number of people who were running up and jostled her. Women were crying and panting, girls were pushing: a man with some object covered up in his arms, was in the midst. When the garb of Miss Castlemaine was recognized in the gloom as that of the Grey Sisters, all fell respectfully back.

"What is amiss, good people?" asked Sister Mary Ursula. And a faint moan of sym-

pathy escaped her as she heard the answer. Polly Gleeson, one of Tim Gleeson's numerous little ones, had set her night-gown on fire and was terribly burnt. Tim was somewhere abroad, as usual: but another man had offered to bring the child to the Grey Ladies—the usual refuge for accidents and sickness.

Admitted to the Nunnery, the little sufferer was carried up to one of the small beds always kept in readiness. Sister Mildred herself, who was great in burns, came to her at once, directing two of the other Sisters what was to be done. The sobbing mother, Nancy Gleeson, who was a great simpleton but had a hard life of it on the whole, asked whether she might not stay and watch by Polly for the night: but the Ladies recommended her to go home to her other children and to leave Polly to them in all confidence. Sister Mildred pronounced the burns, though bad to look at and very painful, not to be attended with danger: should the latter arise, she promised Nancy Gleeson to send for her at once. So Nancy went away pacified, the crowd attending her; and the good Ladies were left to their charge and to the night-watch it entailed.

But Sister Mary Ursula had recognized,

among the women and girls pressing round the gate, the face of Jane Hallet. She recognized the dress also, as the one she had seen before that night.

Meanwhile John Bent reached the coast-guard station. After chatting with the sick woman's husband, Henry Mann, who happened to be off duty and at home, John departed again with his empty basket. He chanced to be on the side opposite the Friar's Keep; for that path led direct from the preventive station—just as the two Sisters, Ann and Rachel, had taken it rather more than an hour earlier. John Bent, quite unconscious of what had happened to them, walked along leisurely, his mind full of the interview just held with Miss Castlemaine. In passing the Friar's Keep he cast his eyes up to it. Few people passed it at night without casting up their eyes—for the fascination that superstition has for most of us is irresistible. Were we told that a ghost was in the next lane, a large percentage of us would run off to see it. Even as John looked, a faint light dawned on the casement from within: and there came into view the figure, bearing its lamp. It was probably just at that self-same moment that the eyes of Madame Guise, gazing

stealthily from the window of Mr. Castlemaine's study, were regaled with the same sight. John Bent did not like it any more than madame did; any more than the Sisters did. He took to his heels, and arrived at the Dolphin in a state of cold chill indescribable.

## CHAPTER VI.

### JANE HALLET.

GREYLANDS lay, calm and monotonous, basking under the morning sun. There were no signs of any of the commotion that had stirred it the previous night: no crowding people surrounding a sad little burden; no women's cries; and John Bent's propriety had come back to him. Greylands had heard the news from one end to the other—the Grey Monk had been abroad again. It had appeared to two of the Sisters and to the landlord of the Dolphin.

The burnt child, an intelligent girl of five years old, lay in the little bed, Sister Phœby sitting with her. The window of the room faced the road; it had upright iron bars before it: originally placed there, perhaps, to

prevent the nuns putting their heads out to take a sly peep at the world. Polly Gleeson was in less pain, and lay quietly. Mr. Parker had looked in, and confirmed Sister Mildred's opinion that she would do well.

The door opened gently, and there entered Sister Mary Ursula and Miss Reene. Ethel, hearing of the accident, had come down from Greylands' Rest. Sister Phœby rose, smiling and nodding, and they approached the bed.

"She is ever so much better," said the watching Sister. "See, she does not cry at all."

Polly was a pretty little girl. Her brown hair lay around her on the bolster; her dark eyes smiled at the ladies. The face was not touched, and nothing could be seen of the injuries as she lay: the worst of them were about the chest and shoulders. Tears stood in Ethel's eyes.

"Poor little Polly!" she said, stooping gently to kiss her. "How did it happen, little one?"

"Billy took the candle to look for a marble on the floor, and I looked too; and then there come a great light and mother screeched out."

"But were you not in bed before that time, Polly? It was past nine o'clock."

"Mother was undressing of us then: she'd been a busy washing."

"Poor little darling! Well, Polly, you will be well soon; and you must take great care of candles after this."

Polly gave as emphatic a nod as the bolster allowed her; as much as to say she would never go within wide range of a candle again. Miss Castlemaine took Sister Phœby's place, and the latter went away.

That the child was now at ease, appeared evident; for presently her eyelids, heavy with sleep, gradually closed. She had had no sleep all night. Mary Ursula took some work from her pocket. The Sisters were making garments for this child: all she had —and a poor "all" it was—had been caught up from the floor by the terrified mother, and rolled round her to put the fire out.

"How peaceful it seems here," said Ethel in a low tone. "I think I should like to come and be a Sister with you, Mary."

Miss Castlemaine smiled one of her sad smiles. "That would never do, Ethel."

"It is so useful a life."

"You will find usefulness in another sphere. It would not be *right* that you should bury yourself here."

"We all told you that, Mary, you know, at Greylands' Rest. But you have done it."

"My dear, the cases are essentially different. My hopes of happiness, my prospects in the world were over: yours, Ethel, are not even yet in the bud. When some good man shall woo and win you, you will find where your proper sphere of usefulness lies."

"I don't want to be won," spoke Ethel: just as young girls are given to say. "I'm sure I would ten times rather be a Grey Sister than marry Harry Castlemaine."

Mary looked up with somewhat unusual quickness. The words brought to her mind one of the incidents of the past night.

"Harry does not continue to tease you, does he, Ethel?"

"Yes he does. I thought he had left it off: but this morning he brought the subject up again—and he let everybody hear him!"

"What did he say?"

"Not very much. It was when he was going out of the room after breakfast. He turned his head to me and said he hoped I should soon be ready with my answer to the question he had put to me more than once. Papa and mamma must have understood what

he meant. I could have thrown the loaf after him."

"I think he must be only doing it in joke, Ethel," was the slow, thoughtful rejoinder.

"I don't know whether he is or not. Sometimes I think he is; at others I think he is in earnest: whichever it may be, I dislike it very much. Not for the whole world would I marry Harry Castlemaine."

"Ethel, I fancy—I am not sure, but I fancy —you have no real cause to fear he will press it, or to let it trouble you. Harry is hardly staid enough yet to settle down. He does many random things."

"We have had quite a commotion at home this morning," resumed Ethel, passing to another topic. "Somebody locked Flora in her bedroom last night—when she wanted to run out this morning as usual, the door was fast. Mamma has been so angry: and when the news of Polly Gleeson's accident came up just now, she began again, saying Flora might just as well have been burnt also as not, burnt to death."

"Who locked her in?"

"I don't know—unless it was Madame Guise. Papa and mamma and I were at

dinner at Stilborough—at the Barclays', Mary. Harry would not go. It was a nice party. We had singing in the evening."

"But about the door?"

"Well, Madame Guise thought she might have unintentionally done it. She said she went in last night to look at Flora. *I* can scarcely think she did it, for she has gone in many a time and never turned the key before. Or the keys of other doors, either."

"At least, it does not seem to have been of any consequence."

"No; only mamma made it so. I tell you every little trifle that I can, Mary," she added, laughing quietly. "Shut up here, it seems to me that you must like to hear news from the outer world."

"And so I do," was the answer. "I have not lost all interest in my fellow pilgrims, I assure you, Ethel."

"I wore my black net trimmed with white satin ribbons: you can't think how nice it looked, Mary," said Miss Ethel, some of her vanity creeping to the fore. "And a silver flower in my hair."

"I have no doubt the dress and the flower did look well, considering what a pretty girl it was adorning," was Mary's reply. And

Ethel blushed slightly. She knew how nice-looking she was.

"Does Madame Guise continue to suit?"

"Oh, quite well. Mrs. Castlemaine thinks there's nobody to equal her. I like her also; but at times she puzzles me."

"How does she puzzle you?"

"Well, I can hardly explain it. She seems strange at times. But I must be going," added Ethel, rising.

"You are in a hurry, Ethel."

"I have to go up the cliff to Miss Hallet's. Jane is hem-stitching some handkerchiefs for mamma. Mamma had one of them with her last night: Mrs. Barclay saw the work, and said she would like some done for herself. So I am to tell Jane to call at Mrs. Barclay's the next time she goes to Stilborough. The work is really beautiful: it is the broad hem-stitch, you know, Mary: four or five rows of it."

A few more words spoken in the same low tone, lest the sleeping child should be disturbed, and Ethel took her departure. Opposite the beach she encountered Mrs. Bent: who was crossing back home in her cherry-ribboned cap from a purchase at Pike's tea and general shop.

"A nice day again, Miss Ethel!"

"It is a lovely day," said Ethel, stopping; for she and Mrs. Bent were great friends. "I have been in to see poor Polly Gleeson. How badly she is burnt!"

"The only wonder is that it never happened before, with that imbecile of a mother," was Mrs. Bent's tart rejoinder. "Of all incapable women, Nancy Gleeson's about the worst. Fancy her letting the children play with a candle in their night-gowns! Where could her senses have been?"

"Well, it is a sad thing for Polly. But the Sisters say she will do well. Oh, by the way, Mrs. Bent," continued Ethel, turning as she was going onwards, "will you let mamma have your receipt for stewed eels again? The new cook does not do them to her mind: and mamma cannot tell where the fault lies."

"It's the best receipt for eels in the three kingdoms," spoke Mrs. Bent with pride. "It was my mother's before me. Will you step across for it now, Miss Ethel?"

"Not now: as I come back. I am going up the cliff."

"To that Nancy Gleeson's, I suppose," cried Mrs. Bent in her free manner. "She does not deserve it. If I had twenty children

about me, I'll be bound not one of 'em should ever set itself alight in my presence."

"Not there," said Ethel, slightly laughing at Mrs. Bent's tartness. "I am taking a message from mamma to Jane Hallet."

"I hope it is to warn her not to make herself so free with Mr. Harry," cried Mrs. Bent, speaking on the moment's impulse. Had she taken time for thought she would not have said it.

"Warn her not to make herself so free with Mr. Harry!" repeated Ethel, somewhat haughtily. "Why, Mrs. Bent, what can you mean?"

"Well, I have seen them walking together after nightfall," said Mrs. Bent, unable to eat her words.

"They may have met accidentally," returned Ethel after a pause.

"Oh, of course, they *may*," assented Mrs. Bent in a significant tone.

"Since when have you seen them?" pursued Ethel, feeling surprised and rather scandalized.

"Ah, well, I can't tell that. Since last autumn, though. No harm may be meant, Miss Ethel; I don't say it is; and none may come of it: but young girls in Jane Hallet's

position ought to take better care of themselves than to give rise to talk."

Ethel continued her way to the cliff in some annoyance. While Mr. Harry Castlemaine made a pretence of addressing herself, it was not agreeable to hear that he was flirting with the village girls. It's true Ethel did not intend to listen to his suit: she absolutely rejected it; but that made little difference. Neither in itself was this walking with Jane Hallet the right thing. What if he made Jane fond of him? many a possibility was more unlikely than that. As to any "harm" arising, as Mrs. Bent had just phrased it, Ethel did not fear that—did not, in fact, cast a thought to it. Jane Hallet was far superior to the general run of the girls at Greylands. She had been well educated by the Grey Ladies, morally and else, having gone to school to them daily for years; she was modest and reticent in manner; and Ethel would as soon believe a breath of scandal could tarnish herself as Jane. Her brother, George Hallet, who was drowned, had been made a sort of companion of by Harry Castlemaine during the last year or two of his life, as Greylands well remembered: and Ethel came to the conclusion that the intimacy

Mrs. Bent talked of must be a sort of remanet of that friendship, meaning nothing; and so she dismissed it from her mind. Mrs. Bent, as Ethel knew, was rather given to find fault with her neighbours' doings.

Now it happened, that as Ethel was ascending the cliff, Jane Hallet, within the pretty cottage near the top of it, was being taken to task by her aunt for the same fault that Mrs. Bent had spoken of—the staying abroad after nightfall. Miss Hallet had latterly found much occasion to speak on this score; but Jane was invariably ready with some plausible excuse; so that Miss Hallet, naturally unsuspicious, and trusting Jane as she would have trusted herself, never made much by the argument.

After taking the cambric handkerchief to Greylands' Rest the previous evening, Jane had gone home, swallowed her tea hastily, put off the best things that her aunt grumbled at her for having put on, and then sat down to work. Some article was wanted in the house; and at dusk Jane ran down in her dark cloak to get it. From which expedition she did not get back until half-past nine was turned: and she seemed to have come up like one running for a wager. Miss Hallet

was then ill with an attack of spasms, and Jane remained unreproved. This morning when the housework was done, and they had begun their sewing, Miss Hallet had leisure to recur to it. Jane sat by the window, busy at one of the handkerchiefs. The sun shone on her bright flaxen hair ; the light print dress she wore was neat and nice—as Jane's dresses always were.

"How long does it take to get from here to Pike's shop and back again, Jane ?"

"From here to Pike's shop and back again, aunt ?—I could do it in a short ten minutes," said unsuspicious Jane, fancying her aunt might be wanting to send her there. "It would take you longer, of course."

"How did it happen then last night that it took you two hours and ten minutes ?" demanded Miss Hallet. "You left here soon after half past seven, and you did not get back till close upon ten."

The soft colour in Jane's face grew bright on a sudden. She held her work to the window, as though some difficulty had occurred in the cambric.

"After buying the sugar, I went into the parlour to say good evening to Susan Pike, aunt. And then there came that dreadful

outcry about Nancy Gleeson's poor burnt child."

The truth, but not the whole truth. Miss Jane had stayed three minutes with Susan Pike; and the commotion about the child had occurred some two hours later. The intervening time she did not allude to, or account for. Miss Hallet, never thinking to inquire minutely into time, so far accepted the explanation.

"If Nancy Gleeson's children had all been burnt, that's no reason why you should stay out all that while."

"Nearly everybody was out, aunt. It was like a fair around the Nunnery gate."

"You go off here; you go off there; pretty nigh every evening you dance out somewhere. I'm sure *I* never did so when I was a girl."

"When it is too dusk to see to work and too soon to light the candle, a run down the cliff does no harm," returned Jane.

"Yes, but you stay when once you are down. It comes of that propensity of yours for gossip, Jane. Once you get into the company of Susan Pike or that idle Patty Nettleby, you take as much thought of time as

you might if all the clocks stopped still for you."

Jane bent to bite off a needleful of cotton—by which her flushed face was hidden.

"There you are! How often have I told you not to bite your thread! Many a set of teeth as good as yours has been ruined by it. *I* had the habit once; but my lady broke me of it. Use your scissors, and—Dear me! here's Miss Reene."

Ethel came in. Jane stood up to receive her and to hear her message. The girl's face was shy, and her manner was very retiring. Ethel thought of what she had just heard; certainly Jane looked pretty enough to attract Mr. Harry Castlemaine. But the blue eyes, raised to hers, were honest and good; and Ethel believed Jane was good also.

"Thank you: yes, I shall be glad to do the handkerchiefs for Mrs. Barclay," said Jane. "But I shall not be going into Stilborough for a week or so: I was there yesterday. And of course I should not begin them until I have finished Mrs. Castlemaine's."

"Very well; I suppose Mrs. Barclay is in no particular hurry," said Ethel.

"Jane might get through more work if she chose," remarked Miss Hallet. "Not that I

wish her to do any: it is her own will entirely. On the other hand, I have no objection to it: and as she is fond of finer clothes than I should purchase for her, she has to get them for herself. Just before you came in, Miss Reene, I was telling her how she fritters away her time. Once dusk has set in, down she goes to her acquaintances in the village, and there she stays with one and another of them, never heeding anything else. It is a great waste of time."

Of all the hot faces, Jane's, at that moment, was the hottest. She was standing before Miss Reene, going on with her work as she stood. Ethel wondered why she coloured so.

"To-night she stays at Susan Pike's; to-morrow night it's at Martha Nettleby's; the next night it's at old Mother Dance's, under the cliff!" went on Miss Hallet. "Chattering with one gossip and another, and dancing after burnt children, and what not, Jane never lacks an excuse for idling away her evenings."

"Mrs. Castlemaine said something about having her initials worked on these handkerchiefs: do you know whether she wishes it done, Miss Reene?" interposed Jane, who seemed to be flurried by the lecture. "I did not like to ask about it yesterday afternoon."

"I don't know at all," said Ethel. "You had better see Mrs. Castlemaine."

"Very well, ma'am."

Ethel went down the cliff again, tripping along the zigzag path. Other paths branched off to other cottages. She took one that brought her to the door of Tim Gleeson's hut: a poor place of two rooms, with a low roof. Tim, a very idle, improvident, easy, and in general good-tempered man, sat on a stone at the door, his blue cloth legs stretched out, his rough face gloomy.

"You are not in the boat to-day, Tim," remarked Ethel.

"Not to-day, Miss Castlemaine," said the man, slowly rising. "I'm a going out with the next tide. This accident have took all strength out of me! When a lot of 'em come fizzing into the Dolphin last night, a saying our Polly was afire, you might ha' knocked me down with a feather. Mrs. Bent, she went on at me like anything, she did—as if it was my fault! Telling me she'd like to shut the inn doors again' me, for I went there when I ought to be elsewhere, and that I warn't good for my salt. I'd rather it had been any of 'em nor Polly: she's such a nice little thing, she is."

"Is your wife indoors?"

"No; she's off to the Nunnery. I've vowed to her that if she ever gets another end o' candle in the house, I'll make her eat it," concluded Tim, savagely.

"But she must have a candle to see with."

"I don't care: I won't have the young 'uns burnt like this. Thanks to you, miss, for turning out o' your way to think on us. The brats be a squalling indoors. I've just give 'em a licking all round."

Ethel ran on, and gained the Dolphin, entering it by the more familiar door that stood open opposite the beach. Mr. and Mrs. Bent were both in the room: he, reading his favourite weekly newspaper by the fire, the Stilborough Herald: she, sitting at the table under the window, stoning a plate of raisins. The receipt Ethel had asked for lay ready.

"You'll please tell Mrs. Castlemaine, Miss Ethel, that more or less pounded mace can be put according to taste," observed the landlady, as she handed Ethel the paper. "There's no particular quantity specified. It's strong; and a little of it goes a great way."

Ethel sat down by the table, putting a

raisin into her mouth. John, who had risen to greet her, resumed his seat again. To say the truth, Miss Ethel liked running into the Dolphin: it made an agreeable interlude to the general dulness of Greylands' Rest. The screen, introduced into the room during the late wintry weather, had been taken away again. Mrs. Bent had a great mind to break it up, and burn it; but for that screen Ethel Reene would not have over-heard those dangerous words. But no allusion had been made to the affair since, by any one of them: all three seemed content to ignore it.

"You must excuse my going on with my work, Miss Ethel," said Mrs. Bent. "We've got a dinner on to-night, and I had no notice of it till a few minutes ago. Some grand Inspector-General of the coast-guard stations is here to-day; and he and two or three more gentlemen are going to dine here this evening. Mr. Castlemaine, I fancy, is to be one of them."

"Mr. Castlemaine is!" cried Ethel.

"Either him or Mr. Harry. I b'lieve it's him. And me with not a raisin in the house stoned for plum pudding! I must make haste, if I am to get it boiled. It's not often I'm taken unawares like this."

"If you will give me an apron to put on, I'll help you to stone them," said Ethel, taking off her black gloves.

"Now, Miss Ethel! As if I'd let you do anything of the kind! But that's just like you—always ready to do anybody a good turn."

"You give me the apron, please."

"I couldn't. If any of them from Greylands' Rest happened to look in, they'd be fit to snap at me; and at you, too, Miss Ethel. Seeing you stoning plums, indeed! There's no need, either: I am three parts through them."

Ethel began to do a few without the apron, in a desultory kind of way, and eat two or three more. John Bent came to some paragraph in the newspaper that excited his ire.

"Hear this!" he cried in anger. "Hear it, Miss Ethel! What a shame!"

"*We have been given to understand that the rumour so freely circulated during this past week, of a matrimonial engagement having been made between Mr. Blake-Gordon and the heiress of Mountsorrel, has had no foundation in fact.*"

"The villain!" cried Mrs. Bent, momen-

tarily forgetting her work. "He can hardly be bad enough to think of another yet."

Ethel's work was arrested too. She gazed at John Bent, a raisin in one hand, a stone in the other. That any man could be so fickle-hearted as this, she had not believed.

"I knew the tale was going about," said the landlord; "I heard it talked of in Stilborough last market day, Miss Ethel. Any way, true or untrue, they say he is a good deal over at the Mountsorrels', and——"

John Bent brought his words to a stand-still; rose, and laid down his newspaper. There had entered a rather peculiar-looking elderly gentleman, tall and upright yet, with a stout walking stick in his hand. He wore a long blue coat with wide skirts and brass buttons, drab breeches and top boots. His hair was long and snow white, his dark eyes were fiery.

Taking off his broad-brimmed hat with old-fashioned courtesy, he looked round the room, particularly at Mrs. Bent and Ethel stoning the raisins. It is just possible he mistook the latter for a daughter of the house, dressed in her Sunday best.

"This *is* the Dolphin, I think!" he cried dubiously.

"At your service, sir," said John.

"Ay, I thought so. But the door seems altered. It's a good many years since I was here. Oh—ay,—I see. Front door on the other side. And you are its landlord—John Bent."

"Well, sir, I used to be."

"Just so. We shall do. I have walked over from Stilborough to see you. I want to know the truth of this dreadful report—that has but now reached my ears."

"The report, sir?" returned John—and it was perhaps natural that he should have his head filled at the moment with Mr. Blake-Gordon and the report touching *him*. "I believe I don't know anything about it."

"Not know anything about it! But I am told that you know all about it. Come!"

Ethel was rubbing her hands on Mrs. Bent's cloth preparatory to drawing on her gloves to depart. To help stone raisins in private at the inn was one thing; to help when visitors came in was a different thing altogether. John Bent looked back at the stranger.

"Perhaps we are at cross-purposes, sir. If you will tell me what you mean, I may be able to answer you."

"Him that I would ask about is the son of the friend of my early days, Basil the Careless. Young Anthony Castlemaine."

The change of ideas from Mr. Blake-Gordon to the unfortunate Anthony was sudden: John Bent gave a groan, and coughed it down. The gentleman resumed, after turning to look at Ethel as she went out.

"Is it true that he, Basil Castlemaine's son, came over the seas to this place a month or two ago?—and took up his abode at this inn?—and put in a claim to his grandfather's estate, Greylands' Rest? Is that true?"

"Yes, sir."

"And where is he, this young Anthony?"

"I don't know, sir. I wish I did know."

"Is it true that he disappeared in some singular way one night—and that he has never since been seen or heard of?"

"That's true, sir—more's the pity."

The questioner took a step nearer John Bent, and dropped his voice to a low, solemn key.

"*I am told that foul play has been at work.*"

"Foul play?" stammered John, not knowing whether this strange old man might be friend or foe—whether he might have come

there to call him to account for his random words. The stranger paused to notice his changing face, and then resumed.

"That the young man has been put out of the way by his uncle—James Castlemaine."

## CHAPTER VII.

### AN UNWELCOME INTRUDER.

THE usual dinner hour at Greylands' Rest was half past one o'clock. Mr. Castlemaine would have preferred a late dinner—but circumstances are sometimes stronger than we are. However, he never failed to put it off until evening upon the very slightest plea of excuse.

Some years before the close of old Anthony Castlemaine's life, his health failed. It was not so much a serious illness as a long and general ailing. His medical attendant insisted upon his dining early; and the dinner hour was altered from six o'clock to half past one. He recovered, and lived on: some years: but the early dinner hour was adhered to. James had never liked this early dining:

and after his father's death he wished to return to the later hour. His wife, however, opposed it. *She* preferred the early dinner and the social supper; and she insisted upon it to Mr. Castlemaine that the interests of Ethel and Flora required that they should continue to dine early. Mr. Castlemaine said he did not see that: Ethel was old enough to dine late, and Flora might make her dinner at lunch time. Yes, poor child, and have cold meat three days out of the seven, urged Mrs. Castlemaine. The Master of Greylands yielded the point as a general rule; but on any special occasion—and he made special occasions out of nothing—his edict was issued for the later dinner.

The dinner was just over to-day, and the servants had withdrawn, leaving wine and dessert on the table. Mr. Castlemaine's sitting down had been partly a matter of courtesy, though he did eat a small portion of meat: he was going to dine in the evening at the Dolphin. The early afternoon sun streamed into the dining-room: a long, comfortable room with a low ceiling, its windows on the side opposite the fire, its handsome side-board surmounted with plate glass at one end; some open book shelves, well filled

with good and attractive volumes at the other. Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine, Ethel, Flora, and Madame Guise, sat at the table. Harry Castlemaine had retired, and his chair stood vacant. As a rule, Madame Guise never sat a minute longer at any meal than she could help: as soon as she could get up without an absolute breach of good manners, she did get up. Mrs. Castlemaine called it a peculiarity. She estimated Madame Guise highly as an instructress, but she admitted to her more intimate friends that she did not understand her. To-day, as it chanced (chanced! do these things ever occur by chance?) she had stayed: and she sat in her place at Mr. Castlemaine's left hand in her perfectly-fitting black dress with its white cuffs and collar, and her wealth of auburn hair shading her pale and quiet face. Mr. Castlemaine was in a sociable mood: latterly he had been often too silent and abstracted. His back was to the sideboard as he sat; handsome, upright, well-dressed as usual. Ethel was on his right hand, the windows behind her, Harry's empty chair between her and Mrs. Castlemaine; and Miss Flora, eating almonds and raisins as fast as she could eat them, sat on the other side her mother

with her back to the fire, and next to Madame.

Mrs. Castlemaine had introduced the subject that was very much in her thoughts just now—a visit to Paris. The Master of Greylands was purposing to make a trip thither this spring; and his wife, to her great delight, had obtained permission to accompany him. She had never been across the water in her life: the days of universal travelling had not then set in: and there were moments when she felt a jealousy of Ethel. Ethel had finished her education in the French capital; and was, so far, that much wiser than herself.

"I long to see Versailles;—and St. Cloud;—and the Palais Royale," spoke Mrs. Castlemaine in a glow of enthusiasm. "I want to walk about amid the orange trees in pots; and in the Champs Elysées; and at Père la Chaise. And I particularly wish to see the Gobelins Tapestry, and the people working at it. *You* must be quite familiar with all these sights, Madame Guise."

"I have seen scarcely any of them," said Madame Guise in her gentle way. Then, perceiving the surprised look on Mrs. Castlemaine's face, she resumed hurriedly. "We did not live very near Paris, madam,—as I

think I have said. And we French girls are kept so strictly :—and my mother was an invalid."

"And the bonbon shops!" pursued Mrs. Castlemaine. "I do count much on seeing the bonbon shops : they must be a sight in themselves. And the lovely bonnets!—and the jewellery! What is it that Paris has been called?—the Paradise of women?"

"May I go too?" asked Ethel with animation, these attractive allusions calling up reminiscences of her own sojourn in Paris.

"No," curtly replied Mrs. Castlemaine.

"Oh, mamma! Why, you will be glad of me to take you about and to speak French for you!"

"*I* shall go, mamma," quickly spoke up Flora, her mouth full of cake. "You told me I should, you know."

"We will see, my darling," said Mrs. Castlemaine, not daring to be too self-asserting just then ; though her full intention was to take Flora if she could contrive it by hook or by crook. "A trip to Paris would be an excellent thing for you," she added for the benefit of Mr. Castlemaine : "it would improve your French accent and form your manners. I'll see, my dear one."

Mr. Castlemaine gave a quiet nod and smile to Ethel, as much as to say, "*I* will see for you." In fact he had all along meant Ethel to be of the party; though he would certainly do his best to leave Miss Flora at home.

At this moment Flora ought to be practising, instead of greedily eating of every dessert dish within her reach: but oughts did not go for much with Miss Flora Castlemaine. They might have gone for nothing but for Madame Guise. That lady, rising now from her chair, with a deprecatory bow to Mrs. Castlemaine for permission, reminded her pupil that she and the piano were both waiting her pleasure.

"I don't want to have a music lesson this afternoon; I don't want to practise," grumbled Flora.

"As you did not get your studies over this morning in sufficient time to take your lesson or to practise before dinner, you must do both now," spoke Madame in her steady way. And Mr. Castlemaine gave the young lady a nod of authority, from which she knew there might be no appeal.

"In a minute, papa. Please let me finish my orange."

She was pushing the quarters of an orange into her mouth with the silver fork. Just then Miles came into the room and addressed his master.

"You are wanted, sir, if you please."

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Castlemaine.

"I don't know, sir. Some oldish gentleman; a stranger. He asked——"

The man's explanation was cut short by the appearance of the visitor himself; who had followed, without permission, from the room to which he had been shown: a tall, erect, elderly man, attired in an ample blue coat and top-boots. His white hair was long, his dark eyes were keen. The latter seemed to take in the room and its inmates; his glance passing rapidly from each to each, as he stood holding his broad-brimmed hat and his stout walking stick. Ethel knew him instantly for the stranger who had entered the Dolphin Inn while she was helping Mrs. Bent with the raisins an hour, or so, ago: and the probability was that he recognised her, for his eyes rested on her for a few seconds.

Mr. Castlemaine had risen. He went a step or two forward as if about to speak, but seemed to be uncertain. The stranger abruptly forestalled him.

"Do you know me, James Castlemaine?"

"Why—yes—is it not Squire Dobie?" replied Mr. Castlemaine, holding out his hand.

"Just so," replied the stranger, keeping his hands down. "Perhaps you won't care to take my hand when you know that I have come here as a foe."

"As a foe?" repeated Mr. Castlemaine.

"At present. Until I get an answer to the question I have come to put. What have you done with Basil's son?"

A change passed over the face of Mr. Castlemaine: it was evident to anybody who might be looking at him; a dark look, succeeded by a flush. Squire Dobie broke the momentary silence.

"My old friend Basil's son; Basil the Careless: young Anthony Castlemaine."

The Master of Greylands was himself again. "I do not understand you," he said, with slow distinctness. "I have done nothing with the young man."

"Then rumour belies you, James Castlemaine."

"I assure you, Squire Dobie, that I know no more whither young Anthony Castlemaine went to, or where he is now than you know.

It has been a mystery to myself, as to every one else at Greylands."

"I got home to Dobie Hall last week," continued the stranger; "mean to stay at it, now; have only made flying visits to it since it became mine through poor Tom's death. Drove into Stilborough yesterday for the first time; put up at the Turk's Head. Landlord, old Will Heyton, waited on me himself this morning at breakfast, talking of the changes and what not, that years have brought, since I and poor Tom, and Basil the Reckless, and other rollicking blades used to torment the inn in the years gone by. We got to speak of Basil; 'twas only natural; and he told me that Basil had died abroad about last Christmas time; and that his son, named Anthony, had come over soon after to put in his claim to his patrimony, Greylands' Rest. He said that Anthony had suddenly disappeared one night; and was thought to have been *made away with*."

During this short explanation, they had not moved. The speaker stood just within the door, which Miles had closed, Mr. Castlemaine facing him a few paces distant. Madame Guise, waiting for Flora, had turned to the stranger, her face changing to the pallor

of the grave. The Master of Greylands caught sight of the pallor, and it angered him: angered him that one should dare to speak of this remarkably unsatisfactory topic in the presence of the ladies of his family, startling and puzzling them. But he controlled his voice and manner to a kind of indifferent courtesy.

"If you will take a seat—and a glass of wine with me, Squire Dobie, I will give you all the information I possess on the subject of young Anthony's disappearance. It is not much; it does not really amount to anything: but such as it is, you shall hear it.—My wife, Mrs. Castlemaine. Sophia," turning to her as he made the introduction, "you had finished, I know: be so good as to leave us to ourselves."

They filed out of the room: Flora first, with Madame Guise; Ethel and her stepmother following. The latter, who knew something of the Dobie family, at least by reputation, halted to exchange a few words with the representative of it as she passed him. To judge by her manner it seemed that she had put no offensive construction on his address to her husband: and the probability was that she did not. Mrs. Castle-

maine might have been less aware than anybody of the disagreeable rumours whispered in Greylands, tacitly if not openly connecting her husband with the doings of that ill-fated night: for who would be likely to speak of them to *her?*

Squire Dobie, remarking that he did not like to sit with his back to the fire, passed round the table and took the chair vacated by Ethel. He was the second son of the old Squire Dobie of Dobie Hall, a fine old place and property nearly on the confines of the county. In the years gone by, as he had phrased it, he and his elder brother, Tom the heir, had been very intimate with Basil Castlemaine. Separation soon came. Basil went off on his impromptu travels abroad—from which, as the reader knows, he never returned; Tom Dobie, the heir, remained with his father at the Hall, never marrying: Alfred, this younger son, married a Yorkshire heiress, and took up his abode on her broad acres. It has been mentioned that Tom Dobie kept up a private occasional correspondence with Basil Castlemaine, and knew where he was settled, but that has nothing to do with the present moment. Some two years ago Tom died. His father,

the old Squire, survived him by a year: and at his death the Hall fell to Alfred, who became Squire in his turn: he who had now intruded on Mr. Castlemaine.

"No thank you; no wine," he said, as Mr. Castlemaine was putting the decanter towards him. "I never drink between my meals; and I've ordered my dinner for six o'clock at the Turk's Head. I await your explanation, James Castlemaine. What did you do with young Anthony?"

"May I ask whether Will Heyton told you I had done anything with him?" returned Mr. Castlemaine, in as sarcastic a tone as the very extreme limit of civility allowed him to use.

"No. Will Heyton simply said the young man had disappeared; that he had been seen to enter that queer place, the Friar's Keep, at midnight, with, or closely following upon, the Master of Greylands. When I inquired whether the Master of Greylands was supposed to have *caused* him to disappear, old Will simply shrugged his shoulders, and looked more innocent than a baby. The story affected me, James Castlemaine; I went out from the breakfast-table, calling here, calling there, upon the people I had

formerly known in the town. I got talking of it with them all, and heard the same tale over and over again. None accused you, mind; but I gather what their *thoughts* were: that you must have had a personal hand in the disappearance of Anthony; or, at least, a personal knowledge of what became of him."

Mr. Castlemaine had listened in silence; perfectly unmoved. Squire Dobie regarded him keenly with his dark and searching eyes.

"I know but little of the matter; less, apparently, than you know," he quietly said. "I am ready to tell you what that little is—but it will not help you, Squire Dobie."

"What do you mean in saying less than I know?"

"Because I never was near the Friar's Keep at all on that night. Your informants, I presume, must have been, by their assuming to know so much."

"They know nothing. It is all conjecture."

"Oh, all conjecture," returned Mr. Castlemaine, with the air of one suddenly enlightened. "And you come here and accuse me on conjecture? I ought to feel supremely indebted to you, Alfred Dobie."

"What they do say—that is not conjecture

—is, that it was you who preceded Basil's son into the Keep."

"Who says it?"

"Basil's son said it, and thought it: it was only that that took him in, poor fellow. The landlord of the inn here, John Bent, saw it and says it."

"But John Bent was mistaken. And you have only his word, remember, for asserting that Basil's son saw or said."

Squire Dobie paused, looking full at his host, as if he could gather by looks whether he was deceiving him or not.

"Was it, or was it not you, who went into the Keep, James Castlemaine?"

"It was not. I have said from the first, I repeat it to you now, that I was not near the Keep that night: unless you call Teague's Hutt near it. As a matter of fact, the Hutt is near it, of course; but we estimate distances relatively——"

"I know how near it is," interrupted Squire Dobie. "I came round that way just now, up the lane; and took soundings of the places."

"Good. I went down to Teague's that night—you have no doubt heard all about the why and the wherefore. I smoked a

pipe with Teague while making the arrangements to go for a sail with him on the morrow; and I came straight back again from the Hutt here, getting home at half-past eleven. I hear that Teague says he watched me up the lane: which I am sure I was not conscious of."

"You were at home here by half-past eleven?" spoke Squire Dobie.

"It had not gone the half hour."

"And did not go down the lane again?"

"Certainly not. I had nothing to go for. On the following morning before it was light, I was roused from my bed by tidings of the death of my brother Peter, and I went off at once to Stilborough."

"Poor Peter!" exclaimed the Squire. "What a nice steady young fellow he was!—just the opposite of Basil. And what a name he afterwards made for himself!"

"When I returned to Greylands in the afternoon," quietly went on Mr. Castlemaine, "and found that Anthony was said to have disappeared unaccountably, and that my name was being bandied about in connection with it, you may imagine my astonishment."

"Yes, if you were really ignorant."

The Master of Greylands half rose from

his chair, and then resumed it. His spirit, subdued hitherto, was quickening.

"Forbearance has its limits, Squire Dobie; so has courtesy. Will you inform me by what right you come into my house and persist in these most offensive and aspersive questions?"

"By the right of my former friendship for your brother Basil. I have no children of my own; never had any; and when I heard this tale, my heart warmed to poor Basil's son: I resolved to take up his cause, and try to discover what had become of him."

"Pardon me, that does not give you the right to intrude here with these out-spoken suspicions."

"I think it does. The suspicions are abroad, James Castlemaine, ignore the fact to yourself as you may. Your name is cautiously used: people must be cautious, you know: not used at all perhaps in any way that could be laid hold of. One old fellow, indeed, whispered a pretty broad word; but caught it up again when half said."

"Who was he?" asked the Master of Greylands.

"I'll be shot if I tell you. John Bent? No, that it was not: John Bent seems as

prudent as the rest of them. Look here, James Castlemaine: if an impression exists against you, you must not blame people, but circumstances. Look at the facts. Young Anthony comes over to claim his property which you hold, believing it to be his. You tell him it is not his, that it is yours; but you simply *tell* him this; you do not, in spite of his earnest request, prove it to him. There's bad blood between you; at any rate there is on your side; and you have an open encounter in a field, where you abuse him and try to strike him. That same night he and John Bent, being abroad together, see you cross the road from this Chapel Lane, that leads direct from your house, you know, and enter the Friar's Keep; young Anthony runs over in your wake, and enters it also: and from that blessed moment he is never seen by mortal eyes again. People outside hear a shot and a scream—and that's all. Look dispassionately at the circumstances for yourself, and see if they do not afford grounds for suspicion."

"If all the facts were true—yes. The most essential link in them is without foundation—that it was I who went into the Friar's Keep. Let me put a question to you—what

object can you possibly suppose I should have in quitting my house at midnight to pay a visit to that ghostly place?"

"I don't know. It puzzles everybody."

"If John Bent is really correct in his assertion, that some one did cross from the lane to the Friar's Keep, I can only assume it to have been a stranger. No inhabitant of Greylands, as I believe and now assure you, Squire Dobie, would voluntarily enter that place in the middle of the night. It has an ill reputation for superstition: all kinds of ghostly fancies attach to it. I should about as soon think of quitting my house at night to pay a visit to the moon as to the Friar's Keep."

Squire Dobie sat in thought. All this was more than plausible; difficult to discredit. He began to wonder whether he had not been hard upon James Castlemaine.

"What is your opinion upon the disappearance?" he asked. "You must have formed one."

Mr. Castlemaine lifted his dark eyebrows.

"I can't form one," he said. "Sometimes I have thought Anthony must have attempted to run down the rocks by the uncertain path from the chapel ruins, and have perished in the sea; at others I think he may have left

Greylands voluntarily that night, and will some day or other reappear again as unexpectedly. His father, Basil, was given to these impromptu flights, you know."

"But this is all supposition?"

"Undoubtedly it is. Who was it, then, they watched into the Keep, you ask?—that is the least-to-be-accounted-for statement of all. My opinion is that no one entered it; that John Bent's eyesight deceived him."

"And now one more question, James," resumed the Squire, insensibly returning to the more familiar appellation of former days: "is Greylands' Rest yours, or was it left to Basil?"

"It is mine."

"Did it come to you by will?"

For a moment Mr. Castlemaine hesitated before giving an answer. The persistent questioning annoyed him; and yet he did not know how to escape it.

"It became mine by Deed of Gift."

"Why did you not show the Deed to Anthony?"

"I might have done so had he waited. He was too impatient. I *should* have done it:" and the emphasis here was marked. "To no one save yourself have I acknowledged so

much, Squire Dobie. I recognise in none the right to question me."

Squire Dobie rose, taking his hat and stick from the side-table where he had laid them, and held out his hand to Mr. Castlemaine.

"If you are an innocent man, James, and I have said what cannot be justified, I heartily beg your pardon. Perhaps time will clear up the mystery. Meanwhile, if you will come over to Dobie Hall, and bring your family to stay a few days, I shall be glad to welcome you. Who was that nice-looking, delicate-featured woman with the light hair ?"

"With the light hair ?—oh, my little daughter's governess. Madame Guise ; a French lady."

"And the very pretty girl who was sitting by you ?"

"Miss Reene. She is my wife's step-daughter."

Squire Dobie took his departure, Mr. Castlemaine walking with him to the hall door. When outside, the Squire stood for an instant, as if deliberating which way to choose—the avenue, or the obscure by-way of Chapel Lane. He took the latter.

"I'll see this Commodore Teague and hear his version of it," he said to himself as he

went on. "James Castlemaine speaks fairly, but doubts of him still linger on my mind: though why they should I know not."

Walking briskly up the lane, as he turned into it, came a tall, handsome young fellow, who bore a great resemblance to the Castlemaines. Squire Dobie accosted him.

"You should be James Castlemaine's son, young man."

Harry stopped.

"I am the son of the Master of Greylands."

"Ay. Can't mistake a Castlemaine. I am Squire Dobie. You've heard of the Dobies?"

"Oh dear yes. I knew Mr. Tom Dobie and the old Squire."

"To be sure. Well there's only me left of them. I have been to pay a visit to your father."

"I hope you found him at home, sir."

"Yes, and have been talking with him. Well you are a fine young fellow: over six feet, I suppose. I wish I had a son like you! Was that poor cousin of yours, young Anthony—who seems to have vanished more mysteriously than anybody ever vanished yet—was he a Castlemaine?"

"Not in height: he was rather short. But he had a regular Castlemaine face; as nice-

looking as they say my Uncle Basil's used to be."

"What has become of him?"

"I don't know. I wish I did know!" Harry added earnestly.

They parted. That this young fellow had borne no share in the business, and would be glad to find its elucidation, Squire Dobie saw. Turning down the little path, when he came to it, that led to the Hutt, he knocked at the door.

Commodore Teague was at dinner: taking it in the kitchen to save trouble. But he had the free and easy manners of a sailor, and ushered his unknown guest in without ceremony, and gave him the best seat, while the Squire introduced himself and his object in calling.

Squire Dobie?—come to know about that there business of young Mr. Castlemaine's, and how he got lost and where he went to: well, in his opinion it was all just moonshine. Yes, moonshine; and perhaps it might be also Squire Dobie's opinion that it was moonshine if he could get to the top and bottom of it. Couldn't be a doubt that the young man had come out o' the Keep after going into it—'twarn't likely he'd stay long in that there

ghostly place—and went off somewhere of his own accord. That's what he, Jack Teague, thought: though he'd not answer for it, neither, that the young fellow might not have made a false step on the slippery rock path, and gone head foremost down to Davy Jones's locker. The shot and scream? Didn't believe there ever was a scream that night; thought John Bent dreamt it; and the shot came from him, Teague; after cleaning his gun he loaded it and fired it off. The most foolish thing in it all was to suspect the Master of Greylands of marching into the Keep. As if he'd want to go there at midnight! or at any other time, for the matter of that. Mr. Castlemaine went away from his place between eleven and half-after; and he, Jack Teague, saw him go up the lane towards his house with his own eyes: 'twarn't likely he'd come *down* it again for the purpose of waylaying young Anthony, or what not.

Now this was the substance of all that the anxious old friend of Basil Castlemaine could obtain from Commodore Teague. The Commodore seemed to be a rough, honest, jovial-speaking man, incapable of deceit, or of double-dealing: and, indeed, as Squire Dobie asked himself, why should he be guilty of it in this

matter? He went away fairly puzzled, not knowing what to think; and leaving the savoury smell, proceeding from the Commodore's stew getting cold on the table. But why it should have pleased the Commodore to favour Squire Dobie with the rough and ready manners, the loose grammar, he used to the common people of Greylands, instead of being the gentleman that he could be when he chose, was best known to himself.

Crossing the road, as he emerged from the lane, the Squire entered the chapel ruins, and went to the edge of the land there. He saw the narrow, tortuous, and certainly, for those who had not a steady foot and head, dangerous path that led down to the strip of beach below: which beach was not discernible now, for it was high water. The path was rarely trodden by man: the ill-reputation of the Friar's Keep kept the village away from it: and, otherwise, there was no possible inducement to tempt men down it. Neither, as some instinct taught Squire Dobie, had it been taken that night by young Anthony Castlemaine.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### IN THE CHAPEL RUINS.

MADAME GUISE sat buried in a reverie. Ethel was reading a French book aloud; Flora was practising: but Madame, supposed to be listening to both, heard neither the one nor the other.

Every minute of the hours that had passed since she saw the diamond ring of her unfortunate husband concealed in Mr. Castlemaine's bureau, had been one of agony. The fright and horror she had experienced in the search was also telling upon her: her head ached, her pulses throbbed, her brain was fevered: and but for the dread of drawing attention to herself, that, in her nervousness, she feared might lead to suspicion, she would have pleaded illness and asked permission to re-

main that day in her chamber. No one but herself knew how she shrunk from Mr. Castlemaine: she could not be in the same room with him without feeling faint; to sit next to him at the dinner-table, to be inadvertently touched by him, was nothing less than torture.

The finding of the ring was a proof to her that her husband had in truth met with the awful fate, suspected; the concealment of the ring in the bureau, a sure and certain sign that Mr. Castlemaine was its author. When they were intruded upon at table by Squire Dobie with his accusing words, Charlotte Guise had been scarcely able to suppress her emotion. Mr. Castlemaine, in catching sight of the pallor of her face, had attributed it simply to the abrupt mention of the disagreeable subject: could he have suspected its true cause he had been far more put out than even by Squire Dobie's words. An idea had crossed Charlotte Guise—what if she were to declare herself to this good old gentleman, and beseech him to take up her cause.

But she did not dare. It was this she was thinking of now, when she ought to have been attending to Miss Flora's imperfect fingering. There were reasons why she might not; why, as she clearly saw, it might do her harm in-

stead of good. With the one sole exception of the ring, there was no shadow of proof against Mr. Castlemaine : and upon the first slight breathing of hostilities, how quickly might he not do away with the ring for ever! And, once let it be declared that she was Anthony's wife, that her chief business in the house was to endeavour to track out the past, she would be expelled from it summarily and the door closed against her. How could she pursue her search then ? No, she must not risk it; she must bury the ring in silence, and stay at her post.

" I *should* think I've practised long enough for one afternoon, Madame !"

Flora gave a final dash at the keys as she spoke—enough to set a stoic's teeth on edge. Madame looked up languidly.

" Yes, you may shut the piano. My headache is painful and I cannot properly attend to you."

No need of further permission. Flora shut down the lid with a bang, and disappeared. Ethel closed her book.

" I beg your pardon for my thoughtlessness, Madame Guise. I ought not to have read to you : I forgot your headache. Can I get you anything for it ?"

"Your reading has not hurt me at all, my dear. No, nothing: only time will cure me."

Ethel, who had moved to the window, and was standing at it, suddenly burst into a laugh.

"I was thinking of that old gentleman's surprise," she said, "when he saw me here. His looks expressed it. Where do you think he had seen me to-day before, Madame Guise?"

The mention of the old gentleman—Squire Dobie—aroused Madame's interest. She lifted her languid head quickly. "I do not know."

"In Mrs. Bent's best kitchen, stoning raisins. I went into the Dolphin to get something for mamma, and began to help Mrs. Bent to do them, for she said she should be late with her pudding. Old Squire Dobie came in and saw me at them. When he found me at home here at dinner, I know he was puzzled."

"What a—strange manner he had;—what curious things he said to Mr. Castlemaine!" spoke Madame, seizing upon the opportunity.

"Yes," said Ethel, flushing scarlet. "I thought him very rude."

"He seemed to think that—that the young Mr. Anthony I have heard tell of was really killed in secret."

"You cannot help people thinking things."

"And by Mr. Castlemaine."

"It was very wrong of him; it must be very foolish. I wonder papa took it so calmly."

"*You* do not think it could be so then?"

"*I!* Is it likely, Madame Guise?"

"But suppose—my dear Miss Ethel, suppose some one were to tell you that it was so: that they had proof of it?"

"Proof of what?"

"Proof that Mr. Castlemaine did know what became of An—of the Mr. Anthony: proof that harm came to him?"

"I should laugh at them," said Ethel.

"And not believe it?"

"No, never."

Ethel left the room with the last words: perhaps to avoid the topic. Madame thought so, and sighed as she looked after her. It was only natural she thought: when we are fond of people we neither care to hear ill spoken of them, nor believe the ill; and Ethel was very fond of Mr. Castlemaine. Charlotte Guise did not wonder: but for this dreadful suspicion, she would have liked him herself. In fact she had insensibly begun to like him, in spite of her prejudices, until this new and most convincing proof of his guilt was dis-

covered in his bureau: the search for which had cost her conscience so much to set about, had taxed her fears so cruelly in the act, and was giving her so intense a torment now. "I wonder what will come of it all in the end?" she cried with a slight shiver. "Qui vivra, verra."

One of the Grey Sisters appeared at Greylands' Rest by-and-by, bringing up little Marie Guise. It was Sister Ruth. Mrs. Castlemaine had graciously invited the child to take tea with her mother. But Mrs. Castlemaine was one who rarely did a kindness without some inward motive—generally a selfish one. Marie was beginning to speak a little English now; but never willingly; never when her French could be by any possibility understood. To her mother she invariably spoke in French; and Mrs. Castlemaine had made the private discovery that, to hear the child and her mother speak together, might improve Flora's accent. So Madame Guise was quite at liberty to have Marie up to tea as often as she liked.

"Do you remember your papa, dear?" asked Mrs. Castlemaine in English, as they sat round the tea-table; Mr. Castlemaine having gone to dine at the Dolphin.

"Sais pas," responded Marie shyly, hanging her head at the question.

"Do you like England better than France, Marie?" went on Mrs. Castlemaine.

"Sais pas," repeated the child unwillingly, as if she meant to cry.

"How is the little burnt girl? Better?"

"Sais pas, moi."

Evidently it was profitless work, the examining of Miss Marie Guise. Ethel laughed, and began talking to her in French. At best, she was but a timid little thing.

Madame Guise started at the dusk hour to take her home; proceeding to the front, open way, down the wide avenue and the high road. At the front door of the Dolphin stood Mrs. Bent, a large cooking apron tied round her waist. She was wiping a cut-glass jug with a soft cloth, and apparently had stepped to the door while giving some directions to Ned the man: who stood ready to run off somewhere without his hat.

"Mind, Ned; the very best mocha. And unless it is the best, don't bring it. I'd sooner use what I've got in the house."

Ned started off across the road in the direction of the beach: no doubt to Pike, the grocer's. Mrs. Bent was whisking in again,

when she caught sight of Madame Guise and the little Marie.

"You are busy this evening," said Madame.

"We've got a dinner on," replied Mrs. Bent, stooping to kiss Marie, of whom she had grown very fond during the child's sojourn and illness at the inn. "And I had no notice of it till mid-day—which of course makes one all the busier. I like to get things forward the day beforehand, and not leave 'em to the last minute: but if you don't know of it you can't do that."

"A dinner?—Yes, I think I heard it said at home that Mr. Castlemaine was dining at the Dolphin."

"He is here, for one. There are five of them altogether. Captain Scott—some grand man he is, they say, who goes about to look up the coast-guard in places; and Superintendent Nettleby; and Mr. Blackett of the Grange. Lawyer Knivett of Stilborough makes the fifth, a friend of Captain Scott's. And I must run in, ma'am, for I'm wanted ten ways at once this evening."

Madame Guise passed on to the Nunnery, and entered it with the child. Sister Betsey shook her head, intimating that it was late for the little one to come in, considering that she

had not long recovered from an illness : and she took her away at once.

This left Madame Guise alone with Miss Castlemaine. Mary Ursula sat away from the light, doing nothing : an unusual thing, for the Sisters made it a point to be always employed. The muslin cap was on her bright hair ; her mourning dress, all crape, handsomer than was strictly consistent with the plain ideas of the community, fell in soft folds around her. These costly robes of Sister Mary Ursula's had been somewhat of a stumbling block in her change of existence : but, as all the Sisters said, it would be a sin against thrift to do away with them before they were worn out.

"You are thinking me very idle," she said to Madame Guise in a light tone of half apology for being caught with her hands before her. "But the truth is, I am feeling very tired this evening ; unequal to work. I had a sleepless night last night, and got up with headache this morning."

"I too, had a sleepless night," said Madame Guise, forgetting caution in the sympathy of the moment. "Troubles were tormenting me."

"What troubles have you ?" asked Mary

Ursula in a kind, gentle tone. "You are satisfied with the care the Sisters give your little one?"

"Oh quite; quite. I am sure she is happy here."

"And you have told me that she and you are alone in the world."

Madame Guise untied her bonnet, and laid it on the chair beside her, before replying.

"Most of us have our troubles in one shape or another, I expect; sometimes they are of a nature that we do not care to speak of. It is that thing that the English call a skeleton in a closet. But—pardon me, Miss Castlemaine—you and I are both young to have already found the skeleton."

"True," said Mary Ursula: and for a moment she was silent from delicacy, intending to drop the subject. But her considerate goodness of heart induced her to speak again.

"You are a lonely exile here, Madame Guise; the land and its people are alike strange to you. If you have any source of trouble or care that it would be a comfort to you to share with another, or that I could in any way help to alleviate, impart it to me. You shall find me a true friend."

Just for one delusive instant, the impulse

to take this grand and sweet and kindly lady into her confidence; to say to her I am trying to trace out my poor husband's fate; swayed Charlotte Guise. The next, she remembered that it must not be; that she was Miss Castlemaine, the niece of that great enemy.

"You are only too good and kind," she rejoined in a sad, faint tone. "I wish I could; I should ask nothing better: but there are some of our burthens we must bear alone."

"Are you quite comfortable at Greylands' Rest?" asked Mary Ursula, unable to repress the suspicion that Mrs. Castlemaine's temper or her young daughter's insolence might be rendering the governess's place a trying one.

"Yes—pretty well. That is, I should be," she hastily added, speaking on the impulse of the moment, "if I were quite sure the house was an honest one."

"The house an honest one!" echoed Mary Ursula in undisguised astonishment, a haughty flush dying her face. "What do you mean?"

"Ah, pardon me, madam!—It may be that I mistake terms—I am not English. I did not mean to say it was a thief's house."

"But what do you mean?"

Madame Guise looked full at the ques-

tioner. She spoke after a short consideration, dropping her voice to a half whisper.

"I would like to know—to feel sure—that Mr. Castlemaine did not do anything with that poor young man, his nephew."

Mary Ursula sat half confounded—the rejoinder was so very unexpected, the subject so entirely disagreeable.

"At least, Madame Guise, that cannot be any affair of yours."

"You are angry with me, madam; your words are cold, your tones resentful. The first evening that I arrived at Greylands I chanced to hear about that young man. Mollee, the servant at the inn, came up to help me make the tisane for my little child, and she talked. She told of the young man's strange disappearance, saying he was supposed to have been murdered: and that Mr. Castlemaine knew of it. Ah, it had a great effect upon me, that history; I was cold and miserable, and my little one was ill; I could not get it away from my mind."

"I think you might have done so by this time," frigidly remarked Mary Ursula.

"But it comes up now and again," she rejoined, "and that keeps alive the remembrance. Events bring it up. Only to-day

when we had not left the dinner-table, some stranger came pushing his way into the room behind Miles, asking Mr. Castlemaine what he had done with Basil's son, young Anthony. It put Mr. Castlemaine out; I saw his face change; and he sent us all from the room."

Mary Ursula forgot her coldness. It was this very subject that had deprived her past night of sleep; though she could no more confess it to Madame Guise than the latter could confess. The two were playing unconsciously at hide-and-seek with one another.

"Who was the stranger, Madame Guise?"

"Mr. Castlemaine called him Squire Dobie. They were together ever so long. Mr. Castlemaine, I say, did not like it; one might see that. Oh, when I think of what might have happened that night to the young Anthony, it makes me shudder."

"The best thing you can do is *not* to think of it, Madame Guise. It is nothing to you, one way or the other. And it is scarcely in good taste for you to be suspicious of Mr. Castlemaine while you are eating his bread. Rely upon it, when this matter shall have been cleared up—if it ever is cleared—Mr. Castlemaine will be found to be as good and honest as you are."

The bell for the Sisters' supper rang clanging out. Madame Guise put her bonnet on, and rose.

"Do forgive me," she whispered with deprecation. "I ought not to have mentioned it to you; I did not wish to offend, or to hurt your feelings. But I am very lonely here; I have but my own heart to commune with."

"And thoughts are free," reflected Mary Ursula. "It was only natural that the mysterious story should lay hold of her." And in her heart she excused the stranger.

"Be at ease," she said, taking Madame's hand. "Dismiss it from your mind. It is not a thing that need trouble *you*."

"Not trouble me!" repeated Madame Guise to herself as she went through the gate. "It is me alone that it ought to trouble, of all in the wide world."

She turned to the right, intending to go home by Chapel Lane, instead of crossing to the broad open front road; but to pass the Friar's Keep at any period of the day, and especially at night, had for Charlotte Guise an irresistible fascination. Some instinct within her, whether false or true, was always whispering

that it was there she must seek for traces of her husband.

She reached the gate of the chapel ruins, hesitated, and then entered it. The same fascination that drew her to pass the Friar's Keep on her road home, caused her to enter the ruins that led to the place. A shiver, induced by nervousness, took her as she closed the gate behind her; and she did not pass into the Keep, but crossed over to the edge of the cliff. The sea and the boats on it seemed like so much company.

Not that many boats could be seen. Just two or three, fishing lower down beyond the village, rather far off, in fact; but their lights proved that they were there, and it made her feel less lonely. It was not a very light night: no moon, and the stars did not shine over brightly; but the atmosphere was clear, and the moss-covered wall of the Friar's Keep with its gothic door might be seen very distinctly.

"If I only dared go in and search about!—with a lantern or something of that!" she said to herself, glancing sideways at it. "I might come upon some token, some bit of his dress, perhaps, that had been torn away in the struggle. For a struggle there must have

been. Anthony was brave, and he would not let them take his life without having a fight for it. Unless they shot him without warning!"

Burying her face in her hands, she shudderingly rehearsed over to herself what that struggle had probably been. It was foolish of her to do this, for it gave her unnecessary pain: but she had got into the habit of indulging these thoughts instead of checking them; and perhaps they came unbidden. You must not cherish your sorrow, we say to some friend who is overwhelmed with grief and despair. No, answers the poor sufferer: but how can I help it? Just so was it with Charlotte Guise. Day by day, night by night, she saw only her husband and his unhappy fate; she was as a sick person in some fever dream, whose poor brain has seized hold of one idea and rambles upon it for ever.

"There's the ring in Mr. Castlemaine's bureau!—and if I could find some other token of his person here, elucidation might come of it," she resumed, lifting her head. "A button; a glove; a torn bit of cloth?—I should know them all. It is *penible* to continue to lead this false life! As I am, unknown, I can do nothing. I may not even ask John Bent

to let me take just one look at his dear effects, or as much as open the lid of his small desk. While I am Madame Guise, it is no affair of mine, I should be told; I must not concern myself with it: but if I might show to the world that I am Charlotte Castlemaine, the right would be all mine. It is awkward; because I may not show it to them; and I can only search out traces in secret: that Friar's Keep may hold proofs of what his fate has been, if I could but go in and look for them."

She turned her head towards the old building, but not very courageously: at the best, it was but a ghostly-looking place at night: and then turned it back and gazed out to sea again.

"No. I should not have the bravery to go in alone; even if I could secure a lantern. There's that revenant that comes; and it might appear to me. I saw it as distinctly last night from Mr. Castlemaine's window as I ever saw anything in my life. And if I were in the place, and it appeared to me, I should die of fear.—I think I half died of fear last night when I heard the voice of Mr. Harry," she went on, after a pause: "there was he, before me, and there was the revenant over here, behind me; and——"

Some sound behind her at this moment nearly made Charlotte Guise start out of her skin. When buried in ghostly visions—say, for instance, in reading a frightful tale alone at night—we all know how a sudden noise will shake the nerves. The gate was opening behind Charlotte, and the fright sent her bang against the wall. There she cowered in the corner, her black clothes drawn round her, suppressing the cry that would have risen to her lips, and praying to escape detection.

She did escape it. Thanks to the shade cast by the angle of projecting wall, and to her dark clothes, she remained unseen. It was Harry Castlemaine who had entered. He advanced to the edge of the cliff, but not near to her, and stood there for a few moments, apparently looking out to sea. Then he pushed open the gothic door, and passed into the Friar's Keep.

What was Charlotte Guise to do? Should she make a dart for the gate, to get away, running the risk of his coming out again and pouncing upon her; or should she stay where she was until he had gone again? She decided for the former, for her present situation was intolerable. After all, if he did see her, she must make the excuse that she had crossed

the ruins to take a look at the beautiful sea: he could not surely suspect anything from that!

But this was not to be accomplished. She was just about to glide away from her hiding place, when the gate again opened, and some other figure, after looking cautiously about, came gliding into the ruins. A woman's light figure, enveloped in a dark cloak, its hood concealing the head and partly the face. It crossed the ruins cautiously, with a side look steadily directed to the Keep door, as if to guard against surprise, and then stood at the edge, under cover of the Keep, gazing attentively out to sea. Madame Guise was at the opposite corner close to the wall of the Nunnery, and watched all this. By the glimpse of the profile turned sideways to her, she thought it was the young girl they called Jane Hallet.

Slowly turning away from the sea, the girl was apparently about to steal back again, when she suddenly drew herself flat against the old moss-eaten wall of the Friar's Keep, and crouched down there. At the same moment, Harry Castlemaine came out of the Keep, strode with a quick step to the gate, and passed through it. The girl had evidently heard him coming out, and wished to avoid him. He

crossed the road to Chapel Lane; and she, after taking another steady look across the sea, quitted the ruins also, and went scuttering down the hill in the direction of her home.

Charlotte Guise breathed again. Apart from her husband's disappearance and the tales of the revenant she so dreaded, Charlotte could not help thinking that things connected with the Friar's Keep looked romantic and mysterious. Giving ample time for Harry Castlemaine to have got half way up the lane on his road home, she entered the lane herself, after glancing up at the two windows, behind which the Grey Friar was wont to appear. All was dark and silent there to-night.

She had not gone ten paces up the lane, when quick, firm footsteps were heard behind her: those of the Master of Greylands. Not caring to encounter him, still less that he should know she chose that lonely road for returning home at night, she drew aside among the trees while he passed. He turned down to the Hutt, and Madame Guise went hastening onwards.

Mr. Castlemaine was on his way homewards from the dinner at the Dolphin. When the

party broke up, he had given his arm to Nettleby, the superintendent; who had decidedly taken as much as he could conveniently carry. It pleased the Master of Greylands, in spite of his social superiority, to make much of the superintendent as a general rule; he was always cordial with him. Captain Scott had taken the same—for in those days hard drinking was thought less ill of than it is in these—and had fallen fast asleep in one of John Bent's good old-fashioned chairs. As Mr. Castlemaine came out of the superintendent's gate, after seeing him safely indoors, he found Lawyer Knivett there.

"Why, Knivett, is it you?" he exclaimed. "I thought you and the captain were already on your road to Stilborough."

"Time enough," replied the lawyer. "Will you take a stroll on the beach? It's a nice night."

Mr. Castlemaine put his arm within the speaker's, and they crossed over in that direction. Both of them were sober as judges. It was hardly light enough to see much of the beauty of the sea; but Mr. Knivett professed to enjoy it, saying he did not get the chance of its sight or its breezes at Stilborough. In point of fact, he had something to say to the

Master of Greylands, and did not care to enter upon the subject abruptly.

"Weary work, it must be, for those night fishermen!" remarked the lawyer, pointing to two or three stationary lights in the distance.

"They are used to it, Knivett."

"I suppose so. Use goes a great way in this life. By the way, Mr. Castlemaine—it has just occurred to me—I wish you'd let me give you a word of advice, and receive it in good part."

"What is it? Speak out."

"Could you not manage to show the deed of tenure by which you own Greylands' Rest?" pursued the lawyer, insensibly dropping his voice.

"I suppose I could if I chose," replied Mr. Castlemaine, after a scarcely perceptible pause.

"Then I should recommend you to do so. I have wanted to say this to you for some little time; but the truth is, I did not know how you would take it."

"*Why* have you wanted to say it to me?"

"Well—the fact is, people are talking. People will talk, you know—great idiots! If you could contrive to let somebody see the deed—of course you'd not seem to show it

purposely—by which you hold the property, the world would be convinced that you had no cause to—to wish young Anthony out of the way, and would stop its blatant tongue. *Do so*, Mr. Castlemaine."

"I conclude you mean to insinuate that the world is saying *I* put Anthony out of the way."

"Something of that. Oh, people are foolish simpletons at the best. Of course, there's nothing in it; they are sure of that; but, don't you perceive, once let them know that young Anthony's pretensions had not a leg to stand upon, and they'd see there was no mo——in fact, they'd shut up at once," broke off the lawyer, feeling that he might be treading on dangerous ground. "If you have the deed at hand, let it be seen one of these first fine days by some worthy man whose word can be taken."

"And that would stop the tongues you say?"

"Undoubtedly it would. It would be a proof that you, at least, could have no motive for wishing Anthony elsewhere," added the lawyer more boldly.

"Then, listen to my answer, Knivett: NO. I will never show it for any such purpose;

never as long as I live. If the world likes to talk, let it talk."

"It does talk," urged the lawyer ruefully.

"It is quite welcome to talk, for me. I am astonished at you, Knivett; you might have known me better than to suggest such a thing. But that you were so valued by my father, and are respected by me, I should have knocked you down."

The haughty spirit of the Master of Greylands had been aroused by the insinuation: he spoke coldly, proudly, and resentfully. Mr. Knivett knitted his brow: but he had partly expected this.

"The suggestion was made in friendliness," he said.

"Of course. But it was a mistake. We will forget it, Knivett."

They shook hands in silence. Mr. Knivett crossed over to the inn, where the fly waited to convey himself and Captain Scott to Stilborough; and the Master of Greylands had then commenced his walk homewards, taking the road that would lead him through Chapel Lane.

## CHAPTER IX.

### MISS HALLET IN THE DUST.

MISS HALLET stood in the parlour of her pretty cottage on the cliff. For a wonder she was doing nothing—being usually a most industrious body. As she stood upright in deep thought, her spare, straight, up-and-down figure motionless, her pale face still, it might be seen that some matter was troubling her mind. The matter was this: Jane (as she phrased it to herself) was getting beyond her.

A week or more had elapsed since the night Jane had made the accident to Polly Gleeson an excuse for staying out late. Children could not be burnt every night,—and yet the fault continued. Each night, since then, had she been out, and stayed later than

she ought to stay : a great deal later than her aunt considered was at all proper or expedient. On the previous night, Miss Hallet had essayed to stop it. When Jane put on her cloak to take what she called her run down the cliff, Miss Hallet in her stern, quiet way, had said, " You are not going this evening, Jane ;" Jane's answer had been, " I must go, aunt; I have something to do "—and went.

" What's to be done if she won't mind me ?" deliberated Miss Hallet. " I can't lock her up : she's too old for it. What she can possibly want, flying down the cliff night after night, passes my comprehension. As to sitting with Goody Dance or any other old fish-wife, as Jane sometimes tells me she has been doing, I don't believe a word of it. It's not in the nature of young girls to shut themselves up so much with the aged. Why, I have heard Jane call *me* old behind my back—and I want a good twenty or thirty years of old Dame Dance's age."

Miss Hallet stopped a minute, to listen to sounds overhead. Jane was up there making the beds. She soon resumed her reflections.

" No, it's not Mother Dance, or any other old mother. It's her love of tattle and gossip.

When young girls can get together, they'd talk of the moon if there was no other subject at hand—chattering geese! But that there's not a young chap in all the village that Jane would condescend to look at, I might think she had picked up a sweetheart. She holds herself too high for any of them. And quite right too: she *is* above them. They are but a parcel of poor fishers: and as to that young Pike, who serves in his father's shop, he has no more sense in him, and Jane knows it, than a kite's tail. No, it's not sweethearts! it's dawdling and gossip along with Susan Pike and the rest of the foolish girls. But oh, how things have changed!—to think that Jane Hallet should consort with such!"

Miss Hallet lifted her eyes to the ceiling, as though she could see through it what Jane was about. By the sound it seemed that she was sweeping the carpet.

"She is a good girl on the whole; I own that," went on Miss Hallet. "Up betimes in a morning, and keeping steady to whatever she has to do, whether it may be house-work or sewing: and never gadding in the day-time. The run in the evening does her good, she says: perhaps so: but the staying late doesn't. I don't like to be harsh with her,"

continued Miss Hallet, after a pause. "She stands alone, save for me, now her brother's gone—and she grieves after him still. Moreover, I am not sure that Jane would stand any harsh authority, if I did put it forth. Poor George would not—though I am sure I only wanted to control him for his good: he went off and made a home for himself down in the village: and Jane has a touch of her brother's spirit. There's the difficulty."

At this moment Jane ran down the stairs with a broom and dust-pan, and went into the kitchen. Presently she came forth in her bonnet and shawl, a small basket in her hand.

"Where are you off to?" asked Miss Hallet snappishly. For if she did acknowledge to herself that Jane was a good girl, there was no necessity to let Jane know it. And Miss Hallet was one of those rigid, well-meaning people who can hardly ever speak to friend or foe without appearing cross. All for their good, of course: as this tart tone was for Jane's.

"To buy the eggs, aunt. You told me I was to go for them when I had done the rooms."

"I'll go for the eggs myself," said Miss Hallet, "I'll not be beholden to you to do

my errands. Take your bonnet off and get to your work. Those handkerchiefs of Mrs. Castlemaine's don't seem to progress very quickly."

"They are all finished but one, aunt. There have been the initial letters to work—which Mrs. Castlemaine decided afterwards to have done; and the letters take time."

"Put off your things, I say."

Jane went away with her bonnet and shawl, came back, and sat down to her sewing. She did not say, Why are you so angry with me? she knew quite well why it was, and preferred to avoid unsatisfactory topics. Miss Hallet deliberately attired herself, and went out for the eggs. They kept no servant: the ordinary work of the house was light: and when rougher labour was required, washing and cleaning, a woman came in from the village to do it. The Hallets were originally of fairly good descent. Miss Hallet had been well reared, and her instincts were undoubtedly those of a gentlewoman: but when in early life she found that she would have to turn out in the world and work for her living, it was a blow that she never could get over. A feeling of blight took possession of her even now when she looked back at that time. In the

course of years she retired on the money bequeathed to her, and on some savings of her own. Her brother (who had never risen higher than to be the captain of a small schooner) had then become a widower with two children. He died : and these children were left to the mercy of the world, very much as he and his sister had been left some twenty years before. Miss Hallet took to them. George was drowned : it has been already stated : Jane was with her still ; and, as the reader sees, was not altogether giving satisfaction. In Miss Hallet's opinion, Jane's destiny was already fixed : she would lead a single life, and grow gradually into an old maid, as she herself had done. Miss Hallet considered it the best destiny Jane could invoke : whether it was or not, there seemed to be no help for it. Men whom she would have deemed Jane's equals, were above them in position : and she believed Jane would not look at an inferior. So Miss Hallet had continued to live on in her somewhat isolated life ; civil to the people around her but associating with none ; and always conscious that her fortunes and her just merits were at variance.

She attired herself in a rather handsome shawl and close straw bonnet, and went down

the cliff after the required eggs. Jane sat at the open parlour window, busy over the last of Mrs. Castlemaine's handkerchiefs. She wore her neat morning print gown, with its small white collar and bow of fresh lilac ribbon, and looked cool and pretty. Miss Hallet grumbled frightfully at anything like extravagance in dress; but at the same time would have rated Jane soundly had she seen her untidy or anything but nice in any one particular. When the echo of her aunt's footsteps had fully died away, Jane laid the handkerchief on the table, and took from her pocket some other material, which she began to work at stealthily.

That's the right word for it—stealthily. For she glanced cautiously around as if the very moss on the cliff side would take note of it, and she kept her ears well on the alert, to guard against surprise. Miss Hallet had told her she did not get on very quickly with the handkerchiefs: but Miss Hallet did not know, or suspect, that when times were propitious—namely, when she herself was away from observation, or Jane safely shut up in her own room—the handkerchiefs were discarded for this other work. And yet, the work, regarded casually, presented no private

or ugly features. It looked like a strip of fine lawn, and was just as nice-looking and snowy as the cambric on the table.

Jane's fingers plied quickly their needle and thread. Presently she slipped a pattern of thin paper out of her pocket, unfolded it, and began to cut the lawn according to its fashion. While thus occupied, her attentive ear caught the sound of approaching footsteps: in a trice, pattern and work were in her pocket again out of sight, and she was diligently pursuing the hem-stitching of the handkerchief.

A tall, plain girl with straggling curls of a deep red darkened the window: Miss Susan Pike, daughter of Pike, the well-to-do grocer and general dealer. Deep down in Jane Hallet's heart there had always lain an instinctive consciousness, warning her that she was superior to this girl, as well as to Matty Nettleby, of quite a different order altogether: but the young crave companionship, and will have it, suitable or unsuitable, where it is to be had. The only young *lady* in the place was Ethel Reene, and Jane Hallet's good sense told her that that companionship would be just as unsuitable the other way: she might as well aspire to covet an intimacy

with a Duchess's daughter as with Miss Reene.

"Well, you *are* hard at work this morning, Jane!" was Miss Susan Pike's unceremonious and somewhat resentful salutation, as she put her hands upon the window-sill and her head inside. For she did not at all favour work herself.

"Will you come in, Susan?" returned Jane, rising and unslipping the bolt of the door: which she had slipped after the departure of her aunt.

"Them are Mrs. Castlemaine's handkerchiefs, I suppose," observed Susan, responding to the invitation and taking a chair. "Grand fine cambric, ain't it! Well, Jane, you do hem-stitch well, I must say."

"I have to work her initials on them also," remarked Jane. "S. C."

"S. C.," repeated Miss Pike. "What do the S. stand for? What's her Chris'en name?"

"Sophia."

"Sophia!—that is a smart name. Do you work the letters in satin stitch?"

"Yes. With the dots on each side it."

"You learnt all that fine hem-stitching and braider-work at the Nunnery, Jane—and your

aunt knows how to do it too, I suppose. *I* shouldn't have patience for it. I'd rather lade out treacle all day: and of all precious disagreeable articles our shop serves, treacle's the worst. I hate it—sticking one's hands, and messing the scales. I broke a basin yesterday morning, lading it out," continued Miss Susan: "let it slip through my fingers. Sister Phœby came in for a pound of it, to make the ladies a pudding for dinner, she said; and I let her basin drop. Didn't mother rate me!"

"Did Sister Phœby say how the child was getting on?—Polly Gleeson."

"Polly's three parts well, I think. Old Parker does not go across there any more. I say, Jane, I came up to ask if you'd come along with me to Stilborough this afternoon."

"I can't," said Jane. "My aunt has been very angry with me this morning. I should no more dare to ask her to let me go to Stilborough to-day than I should dare to fly."

"What has she been angry about?"

"Oh, about my not getting on with my work, and one thing or other," replied Jane carelessly. "She would not let me fetch some eggs just now; she's gone herself.

And she knows that in a few days' time I shall have to go to Stilborough on my own account."

"She's a nice article for an aunt!" grumbled Miss Susan. "I've got to order in some things for the shop, and I thought it would be pleasant for us two to walk there together. You are *sure* you can't come, Jane?"

"Quite sure. It is of no use talking of it."

"I must ask Matty Nettleby, then. But I'd rather have had you."

Miss Susan, who was somewhat younger than Jane, and wore dirty pink bonnet strings, which did not contrast well with the red curls, and a tumbled, untidy frock (but who would no doubt go off on her expedition to Stilborough finer than an African queen) fingered discontentedly, one by one, the scissors, cotton, and other articles in Jane's workbox. She was not of good temper.

"Well, it's a bother! I can't think what right aunts have to domineer over folks! And I must be off to keep shop, or I shall have mother about me. Father's got one of his liver bouts, and is lying a-bed till dinner-time."

"I wish you'd bring me a pound of wool

from Stilborough, Susan? You know where I buy it."

"Let's have the number, then."

Jane gave her a skein of the size and colour wanted, and the money for the purchase. "I'll come down for it this evening," she said. "You'll be back then."

"All right. Good-bye, Jane."

"Good-bye," returned Jane. And as the damsel's fleet steps betook her down the cliff, Jane bolted the door again, put the cambric handkerchief aside, and took the private work out of her pocket.

Meanwhile Miss Hallet had reached the village. Not very speedily. When she went out—which was but seldom—she liked to take her leisure over it. She turned aside to Tim Gleeson's cottage, to inquire after Polly; she halted at the door of two or three more poor fishermen's huts to give the good morrow, or ask after the little ones. Miss Hallet's face was cold, her manner harsh: but she could feel for the troubles of the world, and she gave what help she could to the poor folks around her.

The old woman from whom she bought her eggs, lived in a small cottage past the Dolphin Inn. Miss Hallet got her basket filled

—she and Jane often had eggs and bread and butter for dinner to save cooking—paid, and talked a bit with the woman. In returning, Mrs. Bent was at the inn door, in her chintz gown and cherry cap ribbons.

"Is it you, Miss Hallet! How are you this morning?"

"Quite well, thank you," replied Miss Hallet in her prim way.

"Been getting some eggs, I see," ran on Mrs. Bent, unceremoniously. "It's not often *you* come down to do your own errands. Where's Jane?"

"I left her at work," was the answer. "Jane does not get through her sewing as quickly as she might, and I have been telling her of it."

"You can't put old heads upon young shoulders," cried Mrs. Bent. "Girls like to be idle; and that's the truth. What do you suppose I caught that Molly of mine at, last night? Stuck down at the kitchen table, writing a love-letter."

Miss Hallet had her eyes bent on her eggs, as though she were counting them.

"Writing a letter, if you'll believe me! And a fine thing of a letter it was! Smudged with ink, and the writing like nothing on

earth but spider's legs in a fit. I ordered it put on the fire. She's not going to waste her time in scribbling to sweethearts while she stays with me."

"Did she rebel?" quickly asked Miss Hallet.

"Rebel! Molly! I should like to see her attempt it. She was just as sheepish as a calf at being found out, and sent the paper into the fire quicker than I could order it in."

Gossip about Mrs. Bent's Molly, or any other Molly, was never satisfactory to Miss Hallet. She broke the subject by inquiring after John Bent's health, preparatory to pursuing her way.

"Oh, he's well enough," was Mrs. Bent's answer. "It's not often men get anything the matter with them. If they were possessed of as much common sense as they are of health, I'd say it was a blessing. That weak-souled husband of mine, seeing Molly piping and sniffing last night, told me privately that he saw no harm in love-letters. He'd see no harm in a score of donkeys prancing over his young plants and other garden stuff next, leave him alone."

"I am glad Mr. Bent is well," said Miss

Hallet, taking a step onwards. "Jane told me last week he was ill."

"He had a bilious attack. Jane came in the same night and saw him with his head on a cushion. By the way—look here, Miss Hallet—talking about Jane—I'd not let her be out quite so much after dark, if I were you."

No words could have been more unwelcome to Miss Hallet than these. She was a very proud woman, never brooking advice of any kind. In her heart she regarded Jane as being so infinitely superior to all Greylands, the Greylands' Rest family and the doctor's excepted, that any reproach cast on her seemed nothing less than a presumption. It might please herself to reflect upon her niece for gadding about, but it did not please her that others should.

"Young girls like their fling; I know that," went on Mrs. Bent, who never stayed her tongue for anybody. "To coop 'em up in a pen, like a parcel of old hens, doesn't do. But there's reason in all things: and it seems to me that Jane's out night after night."

"My niece comes down the cliff for a run at dusk, when it is too dark for her to see to sew," stiffly responded Miss Hallet. "I have

yet to learn, Mrs. Bent, what harm the run can do to her or to you."

"None to me, for certain; I hope none to her. I see her in Mr. Harry Castlemaine's company a little oftener than I should choose a girl of mine to be in it. I do not say it is for any harm; don't take up that notion, Miss Hallet; but Mr. Harry's not the right sort of man, being a gentleman, for Jane to make a companion of."

"And who says Jane does make him her companion?"

"I do. She is with him more than's suitable. And—look here, Miss Hallet, if I'm saying this to you, it is with a good motive and because I have a true regard for Jane, so I hope you will take it in the friendly spirit it's meant. If they walked together by daylight, I'd not think so much of it, though in my opinion that would not be the proper thing, considering the difference between them, who he is and who she is: but it is not by daylight, it is after dark."

Miss Hallet felt a sudden chill—as though somebody were pouring cold water down her back. But she was bitterly resentful, and very hard of belief. Mrs. Bent saw the proud lines of the cold face.

"Look here, Miss Hallet. I don't say there's any harm come of it, or likely to come: if I'd thought that, I'd have told you before. Girls are more heedless than the wind, and when they are as pretty as Jane is, young men like to talk to them. Mr. Harry is in and about the village at night—he often says to me how dull his own home is—and he and Jane chance to meet somewhere or other, and they talk and laugh together, roaming about while they do it. That's the worst of it, I hope: but it is not a prudent thing for Jane to do."

"Jane stays down here with her friends; she is never at a loss for companions," resentfully spoke Miss Hallet. "She sits with old Goody Dance: and she is a good deal with Miss Nettleby and with Pike's daughter; sometimes staying in one place, sometimes in another. Why, one evening last week—Thursday was it? yes, Thursday—she said she was here, helping you."

"So she was here. We had a party in the best room that night. Jane ran in; and, seeing how busy I was, she helped me to wash up the glass: she's always good-natured and ready to forward a body. She stayed here till half-past eight o'clock."

Miss Hallet's face looked doubly grim. It was nearer half-past ten than half-past eight when Miss Jane made her appearance at home—as she well remembered.

"And now don't you go blowing up Jane through what I've said," enjoined Mrs. Bent. "We were young ourselves once, and liked our liberty. She's thoughtless; that's all; if she were a few years older, she would have the sense to know that folks might get talking about her. Just give her a caution, Miss Hallet: and remind her that Mr. Harry Castlemaine is just about as far above her and us, as the moon's higher than that old weather-cock a-top of the Nunnery."

Miss Hallet went homewards with her eggs. She had perfect confidence in Jane, in her conduct and principles. Jane, as she believed, would never make a habit of walking with Mr. Harry Castlemaine, or he with her: they had both too much common sense. Unless—and a flush illumined Miss Hallet's face at the sudden thought—unless they had fallen into some foolish, fancied love affair with one another.

"Such things have happened before now, of course," reasoned Miss Hallet to herself as she began her ascent of the cliff: but her tone

was dubious, almost as though she would have liked to be able to tell herself that they never had happened. "But they would know better; both of them; remembering that nothing could come of it. As to the walking together—I believe that's three parts Mrs. Bent's imagination. It is not *likely* to be true. Good morning, Darke!"

A fisherman in a red cap, jolting down the cliff, had saluted Miss Hallet in passing. She went on with her thoughts.

"Suppose I watch Jane a bit? There's nothing I should so much hate as to speak to her upon a topic such as this, and then find I had spoken without cause. It would be derogatory to her and to me. Yes," added Miss Hallet with decision, "that will be the best plan. The next time Jane goes out at dusk, I'll follow her."

The next time happened to be that same evening. Miss Hallet gave not a word of scolding to Jane all day: and the latter kept diligently to her work at Mrs. Castlemaine's handkerchief. At dusk Jane put her warm dark cloak on, and the soft quilted bonnet.

"Where are you going to-night?" questioned Miss Hallet then, with a stress of emphasis on the to-night.

"Just down the cliff, aunt. I want to get the wool Susan Pike was to buy for me at Stilborough."

"Always an excuse for gadding out!" exclaimed Miss Hallet.

"Well, aunt, I must have the wool. I may be wanting it to-morrow."

"You'll toast me two thin bits of toast before you go," said the aunt snappishly.

Jane put off her cloak and proceeded to cut the slices of bread and toast them. But the fire was very low, and they took some considerable time to brown properly.

"Do you wish the toast buttered, aunt?"

"No. Cut it in strips. And now go and draw me my ale."

"It is early for supper, aunt."

"You do as you are bid, Jane. If I feel cold, I suppose I am at liberty to drink my ale a trifle earlier than usual, to warm me."

Jane drew the ale in a china mug that held exactly half-a-pint, and brought it in. It was Miss Hallet's evening allowance: one she never exceeded. Her supper frequently consisted of what she was about to take now: the strips of toast soaked in the ale, and eaten. It was much favoured by elderly people in those days, and was called Toast-and-ale.

Jane resumed her cloak, and was allowed to depart without further hindrance. But, during the detention, the dusk of the evening had become nearly dark. Perhaps Miss Hallet had intended this.

She eat a small portion of the toast very quickly, drank some of the ale, leaving the rest for her return, and had her own bonnet and dark shawl on in no time. Then, locking her house door for safety, she followed in the wake of Jane.

She saw Jane before she reached the foot of the cliff: for the latter's light steps had been detained by encountering Tim and Nancy Gleeson, who could not be immediately got rid of. Miss Hallet halted, as a matter of precaution: it would not answer to overtake her. Jane went onwards, and darted across the road to Pike's shop. Miss Hallet stood in a shady angle underneath the cliff, and waited.

Waited for a good half hour. At the end of that time Jane came out again, a paper parcel in her hand. "The wool," thought Miss Hallet, moving her feet about, for they were getting cramped. "And *now* where's she going? On to the beach, I shouldn't wonder!"

Not to the beach. Jane came back by the side of the shops, the butcher's and the baker's, and the little humble draper's, and turned the corner that led to the Grey Nunnery. Miss Hallet cautiously crossed the road to follow her. When Miss Hallet had her in view again, Jane had halted, and seemed to be doing something to her cloak. The aunt managed to make out that Jane was drawing its hood over her quilted bonnet, so as to shade her face. With the loose cloak hiding her figure, and the hood the best part of her face, Jane's worst enemy would not have known her speedily.

Away she sped again with a swift foot; not running, but walking lightly and quickly. The stars were very bright: night reigned. Miss Hallet, spare of form, could walk almost as quickly as Jane, and she kept her in view. Onwards, past the gate of the Nunnery, went Jane to the exceeding surprise of Miss Hallet. What could her business be, in that lonely road?—a road that she herself, who had more than double the years and courage of Jane, would not have especially chosen as a promenade at night. Could Jane be going dancing up to the coastguard station, to inquire after Henry Mann's sick wife? What simpletons

young girls were! They had no sense at all: and thought no more of appearances than——

A shrill noise, right over Miss Hallet's head, cut her reflections suddenly short, and sent her with a start against the Nunnery palings. It was a bird flying across, from seaward, which had chosen to make known his presence. The incident did not divert her attention from the pursuit for more than an instant; but in that instant she lost sight of Jane.

What an extraordinary thing! Where was she? How had she vanished? Miss Hallet strained her eyes as she asked the questions. When the bird suddenly diverted her attention, Jane had nearly gained the gate that led into the chapel ruins; might perhaps have been quite abreast of it. That Jane would not go in *there*, Miss Hallet felt quite convinced of; nobody would go in. She had not crossed the road to Chapel Lane or Miss Hallet could not have failed to see her cross it: it was equally certain that she was not anywhere in the road now.

Miss Hallet turned herself about like a bewildered woman. It was an occurrence so strangely mysterious as to savour of unreality. The highway had no trap-doors in it: Jane

could not have been caught up into the air.

Miss Hallet walked slowly onwards, marvelling, and gazing about in all directions. When opposite the chapel gate, she took courage to look through the palings at that ghost-reputed place: but, all there seemed lonely and silent as the grave. She raised her voice in call—just as John Bent had once raised his voice in the silent night after the ill-fated Anthony Castlemaine.

"Jane! Jane Hallet!"

"What on earth *can* have become of her?" debated Miss Hallet, as no response was made to the call. "She *can't* have gone up Chapel Lane!"

With a view to see (in spite of her conviction) whether Jane was in the lane, Miss Hallet betook herself to cross over towards it. She went slowly; glancing around and about her; and had got to the middle of the road when a faint light appeared in one of the windows of the Friar's Keep. Miss Hallet had heard that this same kind of faint light generally heralded the apparition of the Grey Monk; and she stood transfixed with horror.

Sure enough! A moment later, and the

figure in his grey cowl and habit glided slowly past the window, lamp in hand. The unhappy lady gave one terror-stricken, piercing scream, and dropped down flat in the dusty highway.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SECRET PASSAGE.

THE kitchen at the Grey Nunnery was flagged with slate-coloured stone. A spacious apartment: though, it must be confessed, very barely furnished. A dresser, with its shelves, holding plates and dishes; a few pots and pans; some wooden chairs; and a large deal table in the centre of the room, were the principal features that caught the eye.

The time was evening. Three of the Sisters were ironing. Or, to be quite correct, two of them were ironing, and the other, Sister Ann, was attending to the irons at the fire, and to the horse full of fresh ironed clothes, that stood near it. The fire threw its ruddy glow around: upon the plates, of the old common willow pattern, ranged on the

dresser-shelves, on the tin dish-covers, hanging against the wall, on the ironing blanket, spread on the large table. One candle only was on the board, for the Sisters were economical, and moreover possessed good eyesight ; it was but a common dip in an upright iron candlestick, and required to be snuffed often. Each of the two Sisters, standing side by side, had her ironing stand on her right hand, down on which she clapped the iron continually. They wore their muslin caps, and had on ample brown-holland aprons that completely shielded their grey gowns, with over-sleeves of the same material that reached up nearly to the elbow.

The Sisters were enjoying a little friendly dispute : for such things (and sometimes not altogether friendly) will take place in the best regulated communities. Some pea-soup, that had formed a portion of the dinner that day, was not good : each of the three Sisters held her own opinion as to the cause of its defects.

" I tell you it was the fault of the peas," said Sister Caroline, who was cook that week and had made the soup. " You can't make good soup with bad peas. It's not the first

time they have sent us bad peas from that place."

"There's nothing the matter with the peas," dissented fat little Sister Phœby, who had to stand in her pattens to obtain proper command of the board whenever it was her turn to iron. "I know peas when I look at them, I hope, and I say these are good."

"Why, they would not boil at all," retorted Sister Caroline.

"That's because you did not soak them long enough."

"Soaking or not soaking does not seem to make much difference," said the aspersed Sister, shaking out a muslin kerchief violently before spreading it on the blanket. "The last time it was my week for cooking we had pea-soup twice. I soaked the peas for four-and-twenty hours; and yet the soup was grumbled at! Give me a fresh iron, please, Sister Ann."

Sister Ann, in taking one of the irons from between the bars of the grate, let it fall with a crash on the purgatory. It made a fine clatter, and both the ironers looked round. Sister Ann picked it up; rubbed it on the ironing cloth to see that it was the right heat,

put it on Sister Caroline's stand, and took away the cool one.

"The fact is this," she said, putting the latter to the fire, "you can't make pea-soup, Sister Caroline. Now, it's of no use to fly out: you *can't*. You don't go the right way to make it. You just put on the liquor that the beef or pork has been boiled in, or from bones stewed down, as may be, and you boil the peas in that, and serve it up as pea-soup. Fine soup it is! No flavour, no goodness, no anything. The stock is good enough: we can't afford better; and nobody need have better: but if you want your pea-soup to be nice, you must stew plenty of vegetables in it —carrots especially, and the outside leaves of celery. That gives it a delicious flavour: and you need not use half the quantity of peas if you pass the pulp of the vegetables with them through the cullender."

"Oh, yes!" returned Sister Caroline in a sarcastic tone. "*Your* pea-soup is always good: we all know that!"

"And so it is good," was easy-tempered Sister Ann's cheery answer: and she knew that she spoke the truth. "The soup I make is not a tasteless stodge that you may almost cut with the spoon, as the soup was to-day;

but a delicious, palatable soup, that anybody may enjoy, fit for the company-table of the Master of Greylands. Just look how your candle wants snuffing!"

Sister Caroline snuffed the candle with a fling, and put down the snuffers. She did not like to be found fault with. Sister Phœby, who wanted a fresh iron, went clanking to the fire in her pattens, and got it for herself, leaving her own in the bars. Sister Ann was busy just then, turning the clothes on the horse.

"What I should do with that cold pea-soup is this—for I'm sure it can never be eaten as it is," suggested Sister Ann to the cook. "You've got the liquor from that boiled knuckle of ham in the larder; put it on early to-morrow with plenty of water and fresh vegetables; half an hour before dinner strain the vegetables off, and turn the pea-soup into it. It will thin it by the one half, and make it palatable."

"What's the time?" demanded sister Caroline, making no answering comment to the advice. "Does anybody know?"

"It must have struck half-past eight."

"Was not Sister Margaret to have some arrow-root taken up?"

"Yes, I'll make it," said Sister Ann. "You two keep on with the ironing."

Sister Margaret was temporarily indisposed; the result, Mr. Parker thought, of a chill; and was confined to her bed. Taking a small saucepan from its place, Sister Ann was reaching in the cupboard for the tin of arrowroot, when a most tremendous ringing came to the house bell. Whether it was one prolonged ring, or a succession of rings, they could not tell; but it never ceased, and it alarmed the Sisters. Cries and shrieks were also heard outside.

"It must be fire!" ejaculated the startled women.

All three rushed out of the kitchen and made for the front door, Sister Phœby kicking off her pattens that she might run the quicker. Old Sister Mildred, who had become so much better of late that she was about again just as the other ladies were, appeared at the door of the parlour with Sister Mary Ursula.

"Make haste, children! make haste!" she cried, as the three were fumbling at the entrance-door, and impeding one another; for "The more haste the less speed," as says the old proverb, held good here.

When it was flung open, some prostrate body in a shawl and bonnet was discovered there, uttering cries and dismal moans. The Sisters hastened to raise her, and found it was Miss Hallet. Miss Hallet covered from head to foot in dust. She staggered in, clinging to them all. Jane followed more sedately, but looking white and scared.

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed compassionating Sister Mildred, whose deafness was somewhat better with her improved health, so that she did not always need her new ear-trumpet. "Have you had an accident, Miss Hallet? Pray come into the parlour."

Seated there in Sister Mildred's own easy-chair, her shawl unfastened by sympathising hands, her bonnet removed, Miss Hallet's gasps culminated in a fit of hysterics. Between her cries she managed to disclose the truth—the Grey Monk had appeared to her.

Some of the Sisters gave a shiver and drew closer together. The Grey Monk again!

"But all the dust that is upon you?" asked Sister Phœby. "Did the Grey Friar do that?"

In one sense yes, for he had caused it, was the substance of Miss Hallet's answer. The

terror he gave her was so great that she had fallen flat down in the dusty road.

In half a minute after Miss Hallet's shriek and fall, as related in the last chapter, Jane had run up to her. The impression upon Miss Hallet's mind was that Jane had come up from behind her, not from before her ; but Jane seemed to intimate that she had come back from Chapel Lane ; and Miss Hallet's perceptions were not in a state to be trusted just then. "What brings you here, aunt ?—what are you doing up here ?—what's the matter ?" asked Jane, essaying to raise her. "Nay," said Miss Hallet, when she could get some words out for fright, "the question is, what brings *you* here ?" "I," said Jane ; "why I was only running to the Hutt, to give Commodore Teague the muffatees I have been knitting for him," and out of Jane's pocket came the said muffatees, of a bright plumb-colour, in proof of the assertion ; though it might be true or it might not. "Has it gone ?" faintly asked Miss Hallet. "Has what gone, aunt ?" "The Grey Friar. It appeared to me at that window, and down I fell : my limbs failed me." "There—there *is* a faint light," said Jane, looking up for the first time. "Oh, aunt !" Jane's teeth began

to chatter. Miss Hallet, in the extreme sense of terror, and not daring to get up, took a roll or two down the hill in the dust : anything to get away from that dreadful Keep. But this bumped and bruised her : she was no longer young ; not to speak of the damage to her clothes, of which she was always careful. So with Jane's help she managed to get upon her feet, and reach the Nunnery somehow ; where, shrieking in very nervousness, she seized upon the bell, and pulled it incessantly until admitted, as though her arm were worked by steam.

"My legs failed me," gasped Miss Hallet, explaining now to the Sisters : "I dropped like a stone in the road, and rolled there in the dust. It was an awful sight," she added, drawing unconsciously on the terrors of her imagination : "a bluish, greenish kind of light at first ; and then a most dreadful, ghostly apparition with a lamp, or soft flame of some kind, in its outstretched arm. I wonder I did not die."

Sister Mildred unlocked a cupboard, and produced a bottle of cordial, a recent present from Mrs. Bent : a little of which she administered to the terrified, nervous woman. Miss Hallet swallowed it in gulps. There

was no end of confused chattering : a ghost is so exciting a subject to discuss, especially when it has been just seen. Sister Ann compared the present description of the Grey Friar with that which she and Sister Rachel had witnessed, not so long before, and declared the two to tally in every particular. Trembling Sister Judith added her personal testimony. Altogether there had not been so much noise and bustle within the peaceful walls of the Nunnery since that same eventful night, whose doings had been crowned by the arrival of poor little Polly Gleeson with her burns. In the midst of it an idea occurred to Sister Mildred.

"But what brought you up by the Friar's Keep at night, Miss Hallet?" she asked. "It is a lonely road: nobody takes it by choice."

Miss Hallet made no answer. She was gasping again.

"I dare say she was going to see the coast-guardsman's wife, sick Emma Mann," spoke Sister Phœby heartily. "Don't tease her." And Miss Hallet, catching at the suggestion in her extremity, gave Sister Phœby a nod of acquiescence. It went against the grain to do so, for she was integrity itself, but

would not have these ladies know the truth for the world.

"And Jane had run on to take the mittens to the Commodore, so that you were alone," said Sister Mildred, following out probabilities in her own mind, and nodding pleasantly to Miss Hallet. "I see. Dear me! What a dreadful thing this apparition is!—what will become of us all? I had not used to believe in it much."

"Well, you see people have gone past the Keep at night lately more than they used to: I'm sure one or another seems always to be passing by it," remarked Sister Ann sensibly. "We should hear nothing about it now but for that."

When somewhat recovered, Miss Hallet asked for her bonnet and shawl: which had been taken away to be shaken and brushed. Leaving her thanks with the Sisters, she departed with Jane, and walked home in humility. Now that the actual, present fear had subsided, she felt ashamed of herself for having given way to it, and particularly for having disturbed the Nunnery in the frantic manner described. But hers had been real, genuine terror; and she could no more have helped its laying complete hold of her at the

time than she could have taken wings and flown away from the spot, as an arrow flies through the air. A staid, sober-aged, well-reared woman like herself, to have made a commotion as though she had been some poor ignorant fish girl! Miss Hallet walked dumbly along, keeping her diminished head down as she toiled up the cliff.

After supper and prayers were over that night at the Nunnery, and most of the Grey Ladies had retired to their rooms—which they generally did at an early hour when there was nothing, sickness or else, to keep them up—Sisters Mildred and Mary Ursula remained alone in the parlour. That they should be conversing upon what had taken place was only natural. Mary Ursula had not, herself, the slightest faith in the supernatural adjunct of the Grey Friar; who or what it was she knew not, or why it should haunt the place and show itself as it did, lamp in hand; but she believed it would turn out to be a real presence, not a ghostly one. Sister Mildred prudently shook her head at this heterodoxy, confessing that she could not join in it; but she readily agreed that the Friar's Keep was a most mysterious place; and, in the ardour of conversation, she dis-

closed a secret which very much astonished Mary Ursula. There was an underground passage leading direct from the vaults of the Nunnery to the vaults of the Keep.

"I have known of it for many years," Mildred said, "and never spoken of it to any one. My sister Mary discovered it: you have heard, I think, that she was one of us in early days: but she died young. After we took possession of this building, Mary, who was lively and active, used to go about, above ground and under it, exploring, as she called it. One day she came upon a secret door below, that disclosed a dark, narrow passage: she penetrated some distance into it, but did not care to go on alone. At night, when the rest of the Ladies had retired, she and I stayed up together—just as you and I have stayed up to-night, my dear, for it was in this very parlour—and she got me to go and explore it with her. We took a lantern to light our steps, and went. The passage was narrow, as I have said, and apparently built in a long straight line, without turnings, angles, or outlets. Not to fatigue you, I will shortly say, that after going a very long way, as it seemed to us, poor timid creatures that we were, we passed through another door,

and found ourselves in a pillared place that looked not unlike cloisters, and at length made it out to be vaults under the Friar's Keep."

"What a strange thing!" exclaimed Mary Ursula, speaking into the instrument she had recently made the good Sister a present of—a small ear-trumpet, for they were talking almost in a whisper.

"Not so strange when you remember what the place was originally," dissented Sister Mildred. "Tradition says, you know, that these old religious buildings abounded in secret passages. I did not speak of the discovery, and enjoined silence on Mary; the Sisters might have been uncomfortable; and it was not a nice thing, you see, to let the public know there was a secret passage into our abode."

"Did you never enter it again?"

"Yes, once. Mary *would* go; and of course I could not let her go alone. It was not long before the illness came on that terminated in her death. Ah, my dear, we were young then, and such an expedition bore for us a kind of pleasurable romance."

Mary Ursula sat in thought. "It strikes me as not being a pleasant idea," she said—

"the knowledge that we may be invaded at any hour by some ill-disposed or curious straggler, who chooses to frequent the Friar's Keep."

"Not a bit of it, my dear," said Sister Mildred, briskly. "Don't fear. We can go to the Keep at will, but the Keep cannot come to us. The two doors are firmly locked, and I hold the keys."

"I should like to see this passage!" exclaimed Mary Ursula. "Are you — dear Sister Mildred, do you think you are well enough to show it to me?"

"I'll make myself well enough," returned the good-natured lady: "and I think I am really so. My dear, I have always meant from the time you joined us to tell you of this secret passage: and for two reasons. The one because the Head of our Community ought not to be in ignorance that there is such a place; the other because it was your cousin who recently has disappeared so unaccountably in the Keep—though I suppose the passage could not have had anything to do with that. But for my illness, I should have spoken before. We will go to-night, if you will."

Mary Ursula eagerly embraced the pro-

posal on the spot. Attiring themselves in their warmest grey cloaks, the hoods well muffled about their heads, for Sister Mildred said the passage would strike cold as an ice-house, they descended to the vaults below; the elder lady carrying the keys and Mary Ursula the lighted horn lantern, which had slides to its four sides to make it lighter or darker at will.

"See, here's the door," whispered Sister Mildred, advancing to an obscure corner. "No one would ever find it; unless they had a special talent for exploring as my poor Mary had. Do you see this little nail in the wall? Well, the keys were hanging up there: and it was in consequence of the keys catching her eye that Mary looked for the door."

It required the efforts of both ladies to turn the key in the rusty lock. As the small gothic door was pushed open, a rush of cold damp air blew on their faces. The passage was hardly wide enough to admit two abreast; at least without brushing against the walls on either side. The ladies held one another; Mary Ursula keeping a little in advance, her hand stretched upwards with the lantern so that its light might guide their steps.

A very long passage: no diversion in it,

no turnings or angles or outlets, as Sister Mildred had described ; nothing but the damp and monotonous stone walls on either hand or overhead. While Mary Ursula was wondering whether they were going on for ever, the glimmer of the lantern suddenly played on a gothic door in front, of the same size and shape as the one they had passed through.

"This is the other door, and this is the key," whispered Sister Mildred.

They put it in the lock. It turned with some difficulty and a grating sound, and the door slowly opened towards them. Another minute, and they had passed into the vaults beneath the Friar's Keep.

Very damp and cold and mouldy and unearthly. As far as Mary Ursula could judge, in the dim and confined light emitted by the small lantern, they appeared to be quite like the cloisters above : the same massive upright pillars of division forming arches against the roof, the same damp stone flooring. There was no outlet to be seen in any part; no staircase upwards or downwards. Mary Ursula carried her lantern and waved it about but could find none : none save the door they had come through.

"Is there any outlet to this place, except the passage?" she asked of Sister Mildred.

"Very, my dear; very damp indeed," was the Sister's answer. "I think we had better not stay; I am shivering with the cold air: and there's nothing, as you perceive, to see."

The ear-trumpet had been left behind, and Mary Ursula did not dare raise her voice to a loud key. She was inwardly shivering herself; not with the chilly, mildewy air, but with her own involuntary thoughts. Thoughts that she would have willingly forbidden entrance to, but could not. With these secret vaults and places under the Keep, secret because they were not generally known abroad, what facilities existed for dealing ill with Anthony Castlemaine; for putting him out of sight for ever!

"Can he be concealed here still, alive or dead?" she murmured to herself. "Surely not alive: for how——"

A sound! A sound close at hand. It was on the opposite side of the vault, and was like the striking of some metal against the wall: or it might have been the banging of a door. Instinctively Mary Ursula hid the lantern under her cloak, caught hold of Sister Mildred, and crouched down with her behind

the remotest pillar. The Sister had heard nothing, of course; but she comprehended that there was some cause for alarm.

"Oh, my dear, what will become of us!" she breathed. "Whatever is it?"

Mary dared not speak. She put her hand on the Sister's lips to enjoin silence, and kept it there. Sister Mildred had gone down in a most uncomfortable position, one leg bent under her; and but for grasping the pillar for support with both hands she must have tumbled backwards. Mary Ursula was kneeling in very close contact, which helped to prop the poor lady up behind. As to the pillar, it was nothing like wide enough to conceal them both had the place been light.

But it was pitch dark. A darkness that might almost be felt. In the midst of it; in the midst of their painful suspense, not knowing what to expect or fear, there arose a faint, distant glimmering of light over in the direction where Mary had heard the sound. A minute afterwards some indistinct, shadowy form appeared, dressed in a monk's habit and cowl. It was the apparition of the Grey Friar.

A low, unearthly moan broke from Sister

Mildred. Mary Ursula, herself faint with terror, as must be confessed, but keenly alive to the necessity for their keeping still and silent, pressed the Sister's mouth more closely, and strove to reassure her by clasping her waist with the other hand. The figure, holding its lamp before it, glided swiftly across the vault amid the pillars, and vanished.

It all seemed to pass in a single moment. The unfortunate ladies—"distilled almost to jelly with the effect of fear," as Horatio says—cowered together, not knowing what was next to happen to them, or what other sight might appear. Sister Mildred went into an ague-fit.

Nothing more came; neither sight nor sound. The vaulted cloisters remained silent and inky-dark. Presently Mary Ursula ventured to show her light cautiously to guide their footsteps to the door, towards which she supported Sister Mildred: who once in the passage and the door locked behind her, gave vent to her suppressed terror in low cries and moans and groans. The light of the lantern, thrown on her face, showed it to be as damp as the wall on either side her, and ghastly white. Thus they trod the passage back to

their own domains, Sister Mildred requiring substantial help.

"Take the keys," she said to Mary Ursula, when they were once more in the warm and lighted parlour, safe and sound, save for the fright. "They belong to your custody of right now; and I'm sure a saint out of heaven would never induce me to use them again. I'd rather have seen a corpse walk about in its grave-clothes."

"But, dear Sister Mildred—it was very terrifying, I admit; but it could not have been supernatural. There cannot be such things as ghosts."

"My child, we saw it," was the all-convincing answer. "Perhaps if they were to get a parson into the place and let him say some prayers, the poor wandering spirit might be laid to rest."

That there was something strangely unaccountable connected with the Friar's Keep and some strange mystery attaching to it, Mary Ursula felt to her heart's core. She carried the two keys to her chamber, and locked them up in a place of safety. Her room adjoined Sister Mildred's; and she stood for some time looking out to sea before undressing. Partly to recover her equanimity,

which had unquestionably been considerably shaken during the expedition; partly to indulge her thoughts and fancies, there she stood. An idea of the possibility of Anthony Castlemaine's being alive still, and kept a prisoner in some of these vaults underneath the Keep, had dawned upon her. That there were other and more secret vaults besides these cloisters they had seen, was more than probable: vaults in which men might be secretly confined for a lifetime—ay, and no doubt had been in the old days; confined until claimed by a lingering death. She did not think it likely that Anthony was there, alive: the conviction, that he was dead, had lain upon her from the first; it was upon her still: but the other idea had crept in and was making itself just sufficiently heard to render her uncomfortable.

Her chamber was rather a nice one and much larger than Sister Mildred's. Certain articles suggestive of comfort, that had belonged to her room at Stilborough, had been placed in it: a light sofa and sofa table; a pretty stand for books; a handsome reading lamp; a small cabinet with glass doors, within which were deposited some cherished ornaments and mementoes that it would have

given her pain to part with; and such like. If Miss Castlemaine had renounced the world, she had not renounced some of its little vanities, its home-refinements: neither did the Community she had joined require anything of the kind to be done. The window, with its most beautiful view of the sea, was kept free; curtains and draperies had been put up, no less for warmth than look: on one side it stood the cabinet, on the other the dressing-table and glass; the bed, and the articles of furniture pertaining to it, drawers, washhand-stand, and such like, occupied the other end of the room. It was, in fact, a sitting-room and bed-room combined. And there, at its window, stood Mary Ursula, shivering almost as much as she had shivered in the cloisters, and full of inward discomfort.

In the course of the following morning, she was sitting with sick Sister Margaret, when word came to her that a gentleman had called. Proceeding to the reception parlour, she found the faithful old friend and clerk, Thomas Hill. He was much altered, that good old man: the unhappy death of his master and the anxiety connected with the bank affairs had told upon him. Perhaps also the cessation from the close routine of

daily business was bearing for him its almost inevitable effect: at least, when Mary Ursula tenderly asked what it was that ailed him, he answered, Weariness, induced by having nothing to do. The tears rushed to his eyes when he inquired after her life—whether it satisfied her, whether she was not already sick to death of it, whether repentance for the step had yet set in. And Mary assured him that the contrary was the fact; that she was getting to like the seclusion better day by day.

"Can you have comforts here, my dear Miss Mary?" he inquired, not at all satisfied.

"Oh, yes, any that I please," she replied. "You should see my room above, dear old friend: it is nearly as luxurious and quite as comfortable as my chamber was at home."

"Will they let you have a fire in it, Miss Mary?"

She laughed; partly at the thought, partly to reassure him. "Of course I could if I wished for it; but the weather is coming in warm now. Sister Mildred has had a fire in her room all the winter. I am head of all, you know, and can order what I please."

"And you'll not forget, Miss Mary, that

what I have is yours," he returned in a low, eager tone. "Draw upon it when you like: be sure to take care of your comforts. I should like to leave you a cheque-book: I have brought it over with its cheques signed——"

She stopped him with hasty, loving words of thanks. Assuring him that her income was enough, and more than enough, for everything she could possibly want, whether individually or for her share in the expenses of the Community. Thomas Hill, much disappointed, returned the new cheque-book to his pocket again.

"I wish to ask you one question," she resumed, after a pause and in a tone as low as his own. "Can you tell me how the estate of Greylands' Rest was left by my grandfather?"

"No, I cannot, Miss Mary; I have never known. Your father did not know."

"My father did not know?" she said in some surprise.

"He did not. On the very last day of his life, when he was just as ill as he could be, my dear good master, he spoke of it to me: it was while he was giving me a message to deliver to his nephew, the young man An-

thony, Mr. Basil's son. He said that he had never cared to inquire the particulars, and fully believed that it became James's by legal right; he felt sure that had it been left to Basil, James would not have retained possession. Miss Mary, I say the same."

"And—and what is your opinion as to what became of Anthony?" she continued after a short pause.

"I think, my dear, that young Mr. Anthony must somehow have fallen into the sea. He'd not be the first man, poor fellow, by a good many, who has met with death through taking an uncertain step in the deceptive moonlight."

Mary Ursula said no more. This was but conjecture, just as all the rest of it had been.

When the visit was over, she put on her bonnet to stroll out with him. He had walked from Stilborough, intending to dine at the Dolphin, and go back afterwards at his leisure. Mary went with him on the beach, and then parted with him at the door of the inn.

"You are sure you are tolerably happy, my dear?" he urged, as though needing to be assured of it again and again, holding both her hands in his. "Ah, my dear young lady, it is all very well for you to say you are; but I cannot get reconciled to it. I wish you

could have found your happiness in a different sphere."

She knew what he meant—found it as William Blake-Gordon's wife—and something like a faintness stole over her spirit.

"Circumstances worked against it," she meekly breathed. "I am content to believe that the life I have embraced is the best for me; the one appointed by God."

How little did she think that almost close upon that minute, she should encounter *him*—her whilom lover! Not feeling inclined to return at once to the Nunnery, and knowing that there was yet a small space of time before dinner, she continued her way alone up the secluded road towards the church. When just abreast of the sacred edifice a lady and gentleman approached on horseback, having apparently ridden from Stilborough. She recognized them too late to turn or retreat: it was William Blake-Gordon and Miss Mountsorrel.

Miss Mountsorrel checked her horse impulsively; he could but do the same. The young lady spoke.

"Mary! is it you? How strange that we should meet you! I thought you never came beyond the convent walls."

"Did you? I go out where and when I please. Are you well, Agatha?"

"Are *you* well?—that is the chief question," returned Miss Mountsorrel, with a great deal of concern and sympathy in her tone. "You do not look so."

Just then Mary undoubtedly did not. Emotion had turned her as pale as death. Happening to catch sight of the countenance of Mr. Blake-Gordon, she saw that his face was, if possible, whiter than her own. A strangely yearning, imploring look went out to her from his eyes—but what it meant, she knew not.

"I shall come and see you some day, Mary, if I may," said Miss Mountsorrel.

"Certainly you may."

They prepared to ride on: Mr. Blake-Gordon's horse was restive. The young ladies wished each other good morning: he bowed and lifted his hat. He had not spoken a word to her, or she to him. They had simply stood there face to face, he on horseback, she on foot, with the tale-telling emotion welling up from their hearts.

Mary opened the churchyard gate, went in, and sat down under a remote tree near the tomb of the Castlemaines, hiding her face in

her hands. She felt sick and faint; and trembled as the young green leaves about her were trembling in the gentle wind. So! this was the manner of their meeting again: when he was riding by the side of another!

The noise of horses, passing by, caused her to raise her head and glance to the road again. Young Mountsorrel was riding swiftly past to catch his sister, having apparently lingered temporarily behind; and the groom clattered closely after him at a sharp trot.

## CHAPTER XI.

### GOING OVER IN THE TWO-HORSE VAN.

AUGUST weather. For some few months have elapsed since the time of the last chapter. Stilborough lay hot and dusty under the summer sun: the pavements shone white and glistening, the roads were parched. Before the frontage of the Turk's Head on the sunny side of Cross Street, was spread a thick layer of straw to deaden the sound of horses and vehicles. A gentleman, driving into the town a few days before, was taken ill there, and lay at the hotel in a dangerous state: his doctor expressed it as "between life and death." It was Squire Dobie, of Dobie Hall.

The Turk's Head was one of those good, old-fashioned, quiet inns, not much frequented by the general public, especially by the com-

mercial public. Its custom was chiefly confined to the county families, and to that class of people called gentlefolk. It was, therefore, very rarely in a bustle, showing but little signs of life except on Thursdays, market-day, and it would sometimes be so empty that Stilborough might well wonder how Will Heyton, its many years' landlord, contrived to pay his expenses. But Will Heyton had, in point of fact, made a very nice nest-egg at it, and did not much care now whether the inn was empty or full.

In the coffee-room on this hot August morning, at a small table by the right-hand window, sat a gentleman breakfasting. A tall, slender, well-dressed young man in slight mourning, of perhaps some six-and-twenty years. He was good-looking; with a pleasing, fair, and attractive face, blue eyes, and light wavy hair that took a tinge of gold in the sunlight. This gentleman had arrived at Stilborough the previous evening by a cross-country coach, had inquired for the best hotel, and been directed to the Turk's Head. It was late for breakfast, nearly eleven o'clock: and when the gentleman—whose name was inscribed on the hotel visitors' list as Mr. George North—came down, he had said

something in a particularly winning way about the goodness of the bed causing him to oversleep himself. Save for him, the coffee-room was void of guests.

"Is this a large town?" he inquired of the portly head waiter, who was partly attending on him, partly rubbing up the glasses and decanters that were ranged on the mahogany stand by the wall.

"Pretty well, sir. It's next in size to the chief county town, and is quite as much frequented."

"What are the names of the places near to it?"

"We have no places of note near to us, sir: only a few small villages that count for nothing."

"Well, what are their names?"

"There's Hamley, sir; and Eastwick; and Greylands; and——"

"Are any of these places on the sea?" interrupted the stranger, as he helped himself to a mutton chop.

"Greylands is, sir. It's a poor little place in itself, nothing hardly but fishermen's huts in it; but the sea is beautiful there.—Bangalore sauce, sir?"

"Well, I don't know," said the young man,

looking first at the bottle of sauce, being handed to him, and then up at the waiter, a laughing doubt in his blue eyes. "Is it good?"

"It's very good indeed, sir, as sauce; and rare too: you'd not find it in any other inn at Stilborough. Not but what some tastes prefer mutton chops plain."

"I think I do," said the stranger, declining the sauce. "Thank you; it may be better to let well alone."

His breakfast over, Mr. George North sat back in his chair, and glanced through the sunbeams at the dusty road and the white pavement. The waiter placed on the table the last number of the Stilborough Herald; and nearly at the same moment there dashed up to the inn door a phaeton and pair. The gentleman who was driving handed the reins to the groom sitting beside him, alighted, and entered the hotel.

The sun, shining right in Mr. George North's eyes, had somewhat obscured his view outwards; but as the gentleman came in and stood upright in the coffee-room, he saw a tall stately man with a remarkably handsome face. While gazing at the face, a slight emotion came suddenly into his own.

"What a likeness!" he inwardly murmured. "Can it be—one of them?"

"How is Squire Dobie, Hobbs?" demanded Mr. Castlemaine of the old waiter—for the new-comer was the Master of Greylands. "Any better to-day?"

"Yes, sir; the doctors think there's a slight improvement. He has had a fairly good night."

"That's well. Is Mr. Atherly expected in to-day, do you know?"

"No, I don't sir. Perhaps master knows. I'll inquire."

While the waiter was gone on this errand, Mr. Castlemaine strolled to the unoccupied window, and looked out on his waiting horses. Fine animals, somewhat restive this morning, and the pride of Mr. Castlemaine's stables. He glanced at the stranger, sitting at the not yet cleared breakfast table, and was taken at once with his bright face and looks. Mr. George North was then reading the newspaper. Hobbs did not return, and Mr. Castlemaine stamped a little with one foot as though he were impatient. A sudden thought struck the young man: he rose, and held out the newspaper.

"I beg your pardon, sir; I am, perhaps, keeping this from you."

"Not at all, thank you," said Mr. Castlemaine.

"I am a stranger; therefore this local news cannot interest me," persisted Mr. George North, fancying courtesy alone might have prompted the refusal. "It is of no moment whether I read the gazette or not."

"I have already seen it: I am obliged to you all the same," replied Mr. Castlemaine in his pleasantest manner, with not a shade of hauteur about it. "Are you staying here?"

"At present I am. It may be that I shall stay but for a short while. I cannot say yet. We artists travel about from village to village, from country to country, finding subjects for our pencil. I have lately been in the Channel Islands."

"Master says he is not particularly expecting Mr. Atherly to-day, sir," interposed Hobbs, returning; "but he thinks it likely he may be coming in. He'll get here about one o'clock if he does come."

The Master of Greylands nodded in reply. "I suppose, Hobbs, Squire Dobie is not allowed to see anyone?"

"Not yet, sir."

Mr. Castlemaine left the room, saluting the stranger at the breakfast table. Hobbs followed, to attend him to the outer door.

"What's the name of the young man in the coffee-room?" he asked, standing for a moment on the steps. "He seems to be a nice young fellow."

"North, sir. Mr. George North. He came in last night by the Swallow coach."

"He says he is an artist."

"Oh, does he, sir!" returned the waiter in an accent of mingled surprise and disappointment. "I'm sure I took him to be a gentleman."

Mr. Castlemaine smiled to himself at the words. Hobbs' ideas, he thought, were probably running on the artists who went about painting sign-boards.

"That accounts for his wanting to know the names of the parts about here," spoke the waiter. "He has been asking me. Them artists, sir, are rare ones for tramping about after bits of scenery."

The Master of Greylands went out to his carriage and took his seat. As he turned the horses' heads round to go back the way they came, Mr. George North, looking on from

within, had for a moment the back of the phaeton pointed right towards him, with its distinguishing crest.

"The crest!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "Then it must be one of them! And I nearly knew it by the face. Shall I ask here which of them it is?—no, better not. Suppose I go out and take a look at the town?" he continued a few minutes later, waking up from a reverie.

Putting on his straw hat, which had a bit of black ribbon tied round it, and a good-sized brim, he went strolling hither and thither. It was not market day: but few people were abroad, and the streets looked almost deserted. People did not care to come abroad in the blazing sun, unless obliged. Altogether, there was not much for Mr. George North to see. Before an inn door stood a kind of small yellow van, or omnibus—it was in fact something between the two—which was being laden to start. It made its journeys three times a week, and was called the two-horse van.

For want of something better to look at, Mr. George North stood watching the putting-to of the horses. On the sides of the van were inscribed the names of the places it called at;

amidst them was Greylands. His eyes rested on the name, and a sudden thought arose to him : Suppose I go over to Greylands by this yellow omnibus !

" Do you call at all these places to-day ?" he asked of a man, who was evidently the driver.

" At every one of 'em, sir. And come back here through 'em again to-morrow."

" Have I time to go so far as the Turk's Head and back before you start ?"

" Plenty of time, sir. We are not particular to a few minutes either way."

Mr. George North proceeded to the Turk's Head ; not in the rather lazy fashion to which his movements seemed by nature inclined, but as fast as the sun allowed him. He there told the head waiter that he was going to make a little excursion into the country for the purpose of looking about him, and might not be back until evening, or even before the morrow.

" Inside or outside, sir ?" questioned the driver when he got back.

" Oh, outside to-day. Can't I sit by you ?"

He was welcome, the driver said, the seat not being taken ; and Mr. George North mounted to the seat and put up his umbrella,

which he had brought with him as a shelter against the sun. Two or three more passengers got up behind, and placed themselves amid the luggage; and there were several inside.

The two-horse van sped along very fairly; and in a short time reached the first village. After descending a hill, the glorious sea burst into view.

"What place do you call this?" asked the stranger.

"This is Greylands, sir."

"Greylands, is it? I think I'll get down here. Dear me, what a beautiful sea! How much do I pay you?"

"A shilling fare, sir. Anything you please for the driver. Thank you, sir; thank you," concluded the man pocketing the eighteenpence given to him. "We shall stop in a minute, sir, at the Dolphin Inn."

On this hot day, which really seemed too hot for work, Mrs. Bent was stealing a few moments' idleness on the bench outside her window. John had been sitting there all the morning. The landlady was making free comments, after her wont, upon the doings, good and bad, of her neighbours; John gave

an answering remark now and again, but she did not seem to wait for it.

There is not much to tell the reader of this short space of time that has elapsed without record. No very striking event had taken place in it; Greylands was much in the same condition as when we parted from it last. Poor Miss Hallet had been ill for some weeks, possibly the result of the fright, and was quite unable to look personally after the vagaries of Miss Jane: the Friar's Keep and its mysteries remained where they had been; Sister Mildred was ill again, and Mary Ursula had not plucked up courage since to penetrate anew the secret passage. Squire Dobie, red-hot at first to unravel the mystery of the disappearance of Basil's son, had finally given up the inquiry as hopeless; neither had Madame Guise advanced one jot in her discoveries touching the suspected iniquity of the Master of Greylands.

"Here comes the two-horse van," remarked Mrs. Bent.

The two-horse van drew up before the bench and close to Mr. and Mrs. Bent. Its way did not lie by that of the ordinary coach road, but straight on up the hill past the Nunnery. Whether it had parcels or pas-

sengers to descend, or whether it had not, it always halted at the Dolphin, to "give the horses a minute's breathing," as the driver said: and to give himself a minute's gossip with the landlord and landlady.

The gossip to-day lay chiefly on the score of the unusual heat, and on some refractory wheel of the van, which had persisted the previous day in dropping its spokes out. And the driver had mounted to his seat again, and the van was rattling off, before Mr. and Mrs. Bent remarked that the gentlemanly-looking man in the straw hat, who had got down, as they supposed, merely to stretch his legs, had not gone on with it.

He was standing with his back to them to look about him. At the pile of buildings rising on his left, the Grey Nunnery; at the cliff towards the right, with its nestling houses; at the dark-blue sea opposite, lying calm and lovely under its stagnant fishing boats. A long, lingering look of admiration at the latter, and he turned round to Mr. and Mrs. Bent, standing by the bench now, but not sitting, and lifted his straw hat as he addressed them.

"I beg your pardon. This seems to be a very nice place. What an expanse of sea!"

"It's a very nice place indeed—for its size, sir," said John. "And you'd not get a better sea than that anywhere."

"The place is called Greylands, I am told."

"Yes, sir: Greylands."

"I am an artist," continued the stranger in his pleasing, open manner, a manner that was quite fascinating both Mr. and Mrs. Bent. "I should fancy there must be choice bits of landscape about here well worth my taking."

"And so there is, sir. Many of 'em."

"Will you give me lodging for a few hours?—allow me to call your inn my head-quarters, while I look about for myself a little?" he continued with a most winning smile.

"And glad to receive you, sir," put in Mrs. Bent before her husband had time to reply. "Our house is open to all, and especially to one as pleasant-speaking as you, sir."

"By the way," he said, stopping to pause when stepping before them indoors, as though he were trying to recall something—"Greylands? Greylands? Yes, that must be the name. Do you chance to know if a French lady is living anywhere in this neighbourhood? A Madame Guise?"

"To be sure she is, sir. She is governess

at Greylands' Rest. Within a stone's throw —as may almost be said—of this house."

"Ah, indeed. I knew her and her husband, Monsieur Guise, in France. He was my very good friend. Dear me! how thirsty I am."

"Would you like to take anything, sir?"

"Yes I should; but not beer, or any strong drink of that sort. Have you any lemonade?"

John Bent had; and went to fetch it. The stranger sat down near the open window, and gazed across at the sea. Mrs. Bent was gazing at him; at his very nice-looking face, so fair and bright, and at the wavy hair, light and fine as silken threads of gold.

"Are you English, sir?" demanded free and curious Mrs. Bent.

"Why do you ask the question?" he returned with a smile, as he threw full on her the light of his laughing blue eyes.

"Well, sir—though I'm sure you are an Englishman in person—and a rare good-looking one too—there's a tone in your voice that sounds foreign to me."

"I am English," he replied; "but I have lived very much abroad, in France and Italy and other countries: have roamed about from

place to place. No doubt my accent has suffered. We can't be a vagabond, you see, madam, without betraying it."

Mrs. Bent shook her head at the epithet, which he spoke with a laugh : few persons, to judge by looks, were less of a vagabond than he. John came in with the lemonade sparkling in a glass.

"Ah, that's good," said the traveller, drinking it at a draught. "If your viands and wines generally are as good as that, Mr. Bent, your guests must be fortunate. I should like to call and see Madame Guise," he added rising. "I suppose I may venture to do so ?"

"Why not, sir ?"

"Are the people she is with dragons ?" he asked, in his half laughing and wholly fascinating way. "Will they eat me up, think you ? Some families do not admit visitors to their governess."

"You may call, and welcome, sir," said Mrs. Bent. "The family are of note hereabout, great gentlefolks—the Castlemaines. Madame Guise is made as comfortable there as if it were her own house and home."

"I'll venture then," said the stranger, taking

his hat and umbrella. "Perhaps you will be good enough to direct the road to me."

John Bent took him out at the front door, and pointed out to him the way over the fields—which were far pleasanter and somewhat nearer than the road way: and Mr. North was soon at the gate of Greylands' Rest. Mrs. Castlemaine was seated under a shady clump of trees, doing some wool work. He raised his hat and bowed to her as he passed, but continued his way to the door. Miles opened it and asked his pleasure.

"I am told that Madame Guise lives here. May I be permitted to see her?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man, admitting him to the hall. "What name?"

"Mr. George North. I have not my cards with me."

"Mr. George North!" repeated Mrs. Castlemaine to herself, for she had been near enough to hear distinctly the conversation in the stillness of the summer's day. "What an exceedingly handsome young man! Quite a Saxon face. I wonder who he is!"

Miles conducted Mr. George North to the red parlour, where Madame Guise was sitting with Ethel. "A gentleman to see you,

ma'am," was his mode of introduction : " Mr. George North."

" Mr.—— who !" cried Madame, her manner hurried and startled.

" Mr. George North," repeated Miles : and ushered the gentleman in.

She turned her back upon the door, striving for courage and calmness in the one brief moment of preparation that she might dare to snatch. But that Ethel's attention was given to the stranger, she had not failed to see the agitation. Madame's pocket-handkerchief was clutched almost through in her nervous hand.

" How do you do, Madame Guise ?"

She turned round then, meeting him in the middle of the room. Her face was white as death as she put out her hand to him. His own manner was unembarrassed, but his countenance at the moment looked strangely grave.

" Being in the neighbourhood I have ventured to call upon you, Madame Guise. I hope you have been well."

" Quite well, thank you," she said in a low tone, pointing to a chair, and sitting down herself. " I am so much surprised to see you."

"No doubt you are. How is the little girl?"

"She is at school with some good ladies, and she is quite happy there," replied Madame Guise, speaking rather more freely. "I thought you were in Italy, Mr. North."

"I left Italy some weeks ago. Since then I have been wandering onwards, from place to place, sketching this, sketching that, in my usual rather vagabond fashion, and have at length turned up in England."

The laughing light was coming back to his eyes again: he momentarily turned them on Ethel as he spoke. Madame Guise seemed to consider she might be under an obligation to introduce him.

"Mr. George North, my dear. Miss Ethel Reene, sir; one of my pupils."

Mr. George North rose from his chair and bowed elaborately: Ethel bowed slightly, smiled, and blushed. She was very much taken with the young man: and perhaps, if the truth were known, he was with her. Certain it was, that she was looking very pretty in her summer dress of white muslin, with the silver-grey ribbons in her hair.

"Did you come straight to England from Italy?" asked Madame Guise.

"My fashion of coming was not straight but very crooked," he answered. "I took the Channel Islands in my way."

"The Channel Islands!"

"Jersey and Guernsey and Sark. Though I am not quite sure how I got there," he added in his very charming manner, and with another glance and half smile at Ethel; who blushed again vividly as she met it, and for no earthly reason.

"But you could not fly over to them in your sleep," debated Madame Guise, taking his words literally.

"I suppose not. I was at St. Malo one day, and I presume I must have gone from thence in a boat. One of these days, when my fortune's made, I intend to take up my abode for a few months at Sark. The climate is lovely; the scenery beautiful."

"How did you know I was here?" asked Madame Guise.

"I saw—I saw Madame de Rhone in France," he replied, making a slight break, as put. "She told me you had come to England and were living with an English family at a place called Greylands," he continued. "Finding myself to-day at Greylands, I could but try to find you out."

"You are very good," murmured Madame, whose hands were again beginning to show signs of trembling.

Ethel rose to leave the room. It occurred to her that Madame might like to be alone with her friend, and she had stayed long enough for good manners. At that same moment, however, Mrs. Castlemaine came in by the open glass-doors, so Ethel's considerate thought was foiled. Mrs. Castlemaine bowed slightly as she looked at the stranger.

"Mr. North, madam; a friend of my late husband's," spoke Madame Guise, quite unable to prevent her voice from betraying agitation. "He was at Greylands to-day and has found me out."

"We are very pleased to see Mr. North," said Mrs. Castlemaine, turning to him with her most gracious tones, for the good looks and easy manners of the stranger had favourably impressed her. "Are you staying at Greylands?"

"I am travelling about, madam, from place to place, taking sketches. I have recently come from Hampshire; previous to that, I was in the Channel Islands. Last night I slept at Stilborough, and came to Greylands this morning by a conveyance that I heard

called the 'two-horse van' in search of objects for my pencil."

He mentioned the "two-horse van" so quaintly that Mrs. Castlemaine burst into a laugh. "I think you must have been jolted," she said, and Mr. North bowed.

"Remembering to have been told that Madame Guise, the wife of my late dear friend, Monsieur Guise, was residing with a family at a place called Greylands, I made inquiries for the address at the inn here, and presumed to call."

He bowed again slightly with somewhat of deprecation to Mrs. Castlemaine as he spoke. She assured him he was quite welcome; that it was no presumption.

"Are you an artist by profession, Mr. North?—Or do you take sketches for pleasure?" she asked presently, as the conversation proceeded.

"Something of both, madam. I cannot say that I am dependent on my pencil. I once painted what my friends were pleased to call a good picture, and it was exhibited—and bought—in Paris."

"A water-colour?"

"Yes, a water-colour."

"I hope you got a good price for it."

"Five thousand francs."

"How much is that in English money?" asked Mrs. Castlemaine, after an electrified pause, for at the first moment her ideas had run to five thousand pounds.

"Two hundred pounds. It was a scene taken in the Alpes-Maritimes."

"You have been much abroad, Mr. North?"

"Oh, very much. I have latterly been staying for more than a year in Italy."

"How you must have enjoyed it?"

"For the time of sojourn I did. But it will always lie on my mind in a heavy weight of repentance."

"But why?" exclaimed Mrs. Castlemaine.

"Because—" and there he made a pause. "In my unpardonable thoughtlessness, madam, I, roving about from spot to spot, omitted sometimes to give my family any address where news from them might find me."

"And you had cause to repent not doing it?"

"Bitter cause," he answered, a *wrung* expression resting for an instant on his face. "My father died during that time; and—there were other matters wanting me. My life, so far as that past portion of it goes, will be one of unavailing repentance."

It almost seemed—at least the fancy struck Ethel—that Mr. North gave this little bit of unusual confidence—unusual in a stranger—for the benefit of Madame Guise. Certain it was, that he looked at her two or three times as he spoke; and on her face there shone a strangely sad and regretful light.

In about half an hour he rose to depart. Mrs. Castlemaine offered luncheon, but he declined it. He had been a lazy lie-a-bed that morning, he said with a laughing smile, and it seemed but now almost that he had taken his breakfast at the Turk's Head. The impression he left behind him was not so much of a stranger, as of an acquaintance they had known, so pleasant and easy had been the intercourse during the interview; and an acquaintance they were sorry to part with.

Madame Guise went with him across the lawn. Mrs. Castlemaine would have gone too, but that Ethel stopped her. "Mamma, don't," she whispered: "they may be glad to have a few moments alone. I fancy Madame Guise cannot have seen him since before her husband died: she seemed quite agitated when he came in."

"True," said Mrs. Castlemaine, for once

recognising reason in words of Ethel's. "What a gentlemanly young fellow he seems —in spite of that wide straw hat."

He had put the straw hat on, and seemed to be looking at the different flower beds in his progress; Madame Guise pointing to one and another with her finger. Had Mrs. Castlemaine caught but a word of the private conversation being carried on under the semblance of admiring the flowers, she might have stolen out to listen in the gratification of her curiosity. Which would not have served her, for they spoke in French.

"How you startled me, George!" cried Madame Guise, as their heads were both bent over a rose-tree. "I thought I should have fainted. It might have made me discover all. Let us walk on!"

"Well, I suppose I ought to have written first. But I thought I should be introduced to you alone—your being here as the governess."

"How are they all at Gap?—Look at these carnations.—How is Emma? Did you get my letter through her?"

"I got it when I reached Gap. They are all well. She gave me your letter and what

news she could. I cannot understand it, Charlotte. *Where* is Anthony?"

"Dead. Murdered. As I truly and fully believe."

Mr. North lifted his hat and passed his white handkerchief across his brow, very perplexed and stern just then.

"When can I see you alone, Charlotte?"

"This evening. As soon as dusk sets in, I will meet you in Chapel Lane:" and she directed him where to find it. "You stay at the lower end near that great building almost in ruins, the Friar's Keep, and I will come to you. Are you here at last to help me unravel the treachery, George?"

"I will try to do it."

"But why have you been so tardy?—why did you go to—what did you say—those Channel Islands?"

"I had an artist friend with me who *would* go over there. I did not care to show too much eagerness to come on to England—he might have suspected I had a motive. And it seems to me, Charlotte, that this investigation will be a most delicate business; one that a breath of suspicion, as to who I am, might defeat."

"And oh, why did you linger so long in Italy, George?" she asked in a low tone of painful wailing. "And to have neglected for months to let us get an address that would certainly find you! Had you been at Gap when the father died, the probability is that Anthony and you would have made the journey here in company. Surely Mr. James Castlemaine had not dared to kill him then!"

"Hush!" he answered in a voice more bitterly painful than her own. "You heard what I said just now in the salon: the regret, the self-reproach will only cease with my life. Until this evening then, Charlotte!"

"Until this evening."

"Who is that charming demoiselle?" he asked, as they shook hands in parting. "What relation is she to the house?"

"No real relation of it at all. She is Miss Reene; Mrs. Castlemaine's step-daughter. Mrs. Castlemaine was a widow when she married into the family."

Mr. George North closed the gate behind him; took off his hat to Madame with the peculiar action of a Frenchman, and walked away.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MR. GEORGE NORTH.

IF there existed one man eminently open by nature, more truthful, devoid of guile, and less capable of deceit than his fellows, it was certainly George North. And yet he was acting a deceitful part now; inasmuch as that he had made his appearance in England and introduced himself at Greylands' Rest, under what might be called a partially false name. For the name "George North" had but been given him in baptism: the other, the chief one, was Castlemaine. He was the son of Basil Castlemaine, and the younger brother of the most unfortunate Anthony.

Four children had been born to Basil Castlemaine and his wife. They were named as follows; Anthony, Mary Ursula, George

North, and Emma. The elder daughter died young : the wife died just as her other children had grown up. Anthony married Charlotte Guise ; Emma married Monsieur de Rhone, a gentleman who was now the chief partner in the Silk Mills, with which Basil Castlemaine had been connected. The two young Castlemaines, Anthony and George, had both declined to engage in commerce. Their father pointed to them that a share in the Silk Mills was open to each, and no doubt a good fortune at the end of a few years connection with the business ; beyond that, he did not particularly urge the step on either of them. His sons would both inherit a modest competency under his will. Anthony would also succeed (as Basil fully believed) to his forefather's patrimony in England, Greylands' Rest, which would necessitate his residence there ; and George at the age of twenty-four, came into a fairly good fortune left to him by his uncle and godfather, Mr. North. Therefore, both of them were considered by the father to be provided for, and if they preferred to eschew commerce, they were welcome to do so. George had shown very considerable talent for drawing and painting ; it had been well cultivated ; and though he did not intend to make it exactly his profes-

sion, for he needed it not, he did hope to become famous as a water-colour painter. Some time after attaining the age of twenty-four, and taking possession of his bequeathed fortune, he had resolved on making a lengthened sojourn in Italy; not to stay in one part of it, but to move about as inclination dictated. And this he did. From time to time he wrote home, saying where he then was; but rarely where he would be later, simply because he did not know, himself. Two or three letters reached him in return, containing the information that all was well.

All being well seems to the young to mean always to be well; as it did to George Castlemaine: his mind was at rest, and for several months there ensued a gap of silence. It's true he wrote home; but, as to tidings from home reaching him in return, he did not afford a chance for it. He crossed to Sicily, to Corsica; he went to the Ionian Isles; it is hard to say where he did not go. When tidings from home at length reached him, he found that his family, whom he had been picturing as unchanged and happy, was totally dispersed. His father was dead. Anthony had gone over to England to see after his patrimony; and, not returning as he ought to

have done, his wife and child had followed him. Emma de Rhone, who conveyed all this, in writing, to her brother, confessed she did not understand what could have become of Anthony; but that she did not think he could have lost himself, though of course England was a large place, and he, being strange, might have a difficulty in making his way about it. To this portion of the letter George gave no heed; at a happier time he would have laughed at the notion of Anthony's being lost; his whole heart was absorbed in the grief for his father and in self-reproach for his own supine carelessness.

He did not hurry home: there was nothing to go for now: and it was summer weather when George once more re-entered Gap. To his intense astonishment, his concern, his perplexity, he found that Anthony really was lost: at least, that his wife seemed unable to discover traces of him. Emma de Rhone handed him a thick letter of several sheets, which had come enclosed to her for him from Charlotte many weeks before, and had been waiting for him. When George Castlemaine broke the seal, he found it to contain a detailed account of Anthony's disappearance and the circumstances connected with it,

together with her suspicions of James Castlemaine, and her residence in that gentleman's house. In short, she told him all ; and she begged him to come over and see into it for himself; but to come as a stranger, en cachette, and not to declare himself to be connected with her, or as a Castlemaine. She also warned him not to tell Emma or M. de Rhone of her worst fears about Anthony, lest they should be undertaking the investigation themselves : which might ruin all hopes of discovery, for Mr. Castlemaine was not one to be approached in that way. And the result of this was that George Castlemaine was now here as George North. He had deemed it well to obey Charlotte's behest, and come ; at the same time he did not put great faith in the tale. It puzzled him extremely : and he could but recall that his brother's wife was given to be a little fanciful—romantic, in short.

Not a breath of air was stirring. The summer night seemed well-nigh as hot as the day had been. There lay a mist on the fields behind the hedge on either side Chapel Lane as Charlotte Guise hastened lightly down it. In her impatience she had come out full early to keep the appointment, and when she reached the end of the lane George North—as for con-

venience' sake we must continue to call him—was but then approaching it.

"You found it readily, George?" she whispered.

"Quite so. It is in a straight line from the inn."

"Are you going back to Stilborough to-night?"

"No. I shall sleep at the Dolphin, and go back to-morrow."

He offered his sister-in-law his arm. She took it; but the next moment relinquished it again. "It may be better not, George," she said. "It is not very likely that we shall meet people, but it's not impossible: and, to see me walking thus familiarly with a stranger would excite comment."

They turned to go up the hill. It was safer than Chapel Lane, as Charlotte observed; for there was no knowing but Mr. Harry Castlemaine might be going through the lane to the Commodore's, whose company both father and son seemed to favour. Mr. Castlemaine was at Stilborough: had driven over in the morning, and was no doubt staying there to dine.

"This seems to be a lonely road," re-

marked Mr. North, as they went on side by side.

"It is very lonely. We rarely meet any one but the preventive-men: and not often even one of them."

Almost in silence they continued their way until opposite the coastguard-station: a short line of white dwellings lying at right angles with the road on the left hand. Turning off to the right, across the waste land on the other side the road, they soon were on the edge of the cliff, with the sea lying below.

"We may walk and talk here in safety," said Charlotte. "There is never more than one man on duty: his beat is a long one, all down there,"—pointing along the line of coast in the opposite direction to that of Greylands —"and we shall see him, should he approach, long before he could reach us. Besides, they are harmless and unsuspicious, these coast-guardsmen; they only look out for ships and smugglers."

"We do not get a very good view of the sea from here: that high cliff on the right is an impediment," remarked Mr. North. "What a height it is!"

"It shoots up suddenly, close on this side the Friar's Keep, and shoots down nearly as

suddenly to where we are now. Ethel Reene climbs it occasionally, and sits there, but I think nobody else does."

"Not the preventive-men?"

"By day sometimes. Never by night; it would be too dangerous. Their beat commences here."

"And now, Charlotte, about this most unhappy business?" said Mr. North, as they began to pace backwards and forwards on the green brow of the coast, level there. "Where are we to look for Anthony? It cannot be that he is *lost*."

"But he is lost, George. He went into the Friar's Keep that unhappy night in February; and he was never seen to come out again. He never did come out again, as most people here believe; I, for one. What other word is there for it but 'lost?'"

"It sounds like a fable," said George North. "Like a tale out of those romance books you used to read, Charlotte."

"I thought so when I came here first and heard it."

"Did that account you sent me contain all the details?"

"I think it did. One cannot give quite so elaborate a history in writing a letter as by

word of mouth. Little particulars are apt to be dropped out."

"You had better go over it to me now, Charlotte: all you know from the beginning. Omit not the smallest detail."

Madame Guise obeyed at once. The opening her mouth to impart this dreadful story, dreadful and more dreadful to her day by day, was something like the relief afforded to a parched traveller in an African desert, when he comes upon the well of water he has been fainting for, and slakes his thirst. Not to one single human being had Charlotte Guise been able to pour forth by word of mouth this strange story all through these months since she heard it: the need to do it, the pain, the yearning for sympathy and counsel, had been consuming her all the while as with a fever heat.

She told the whole. The arrival of Anthony at the Dolphin Inn, and his presenting himself to his family—as heard from John Bent. The ill-reception of him by Mr. Castlemaine when he spoke of a claim to Greylands' Rest; the refusal of Mr. Castlemaine to see him subsequently, and their hostile encounter in the field; the strolling out by moonlight that same night of Anthony and

the landlord; their watching (quite by chance) the entrance of Mr. Castlemaine into the Friar's Keep, and the hasty following in of Anthony, to have it out, as he impulsively said, under the moonbeams; and the total disappearance of Anthony from that hour. She told all in detail, George North listening without interruption.

"And it is supposed that the cry, following on the shot that was almost immediately heard, was my poor brother's cry?" spoke George, the first words with which he broke the silence.

"I feel *sure* it was his cry, George."

"And Mr. James Castlemaine denies that he was there?"

"He denies it entirely. He says he was at home at the time and in bed."

"Suppose that it was Anthony who cried; that he was killed by the shot: would it be easy to throw him into the sea out of sight?"

"Not from the Keep. They say there is no opening to the sea. Mr. Castlemaine may have dragged him across the chapel ruins and flung him from thence."

"But could he have done that without

being seen? John Bent, you say, was outside the gates, waiting for Anthony."

"But John Bent was not there all the time. When he got tired of waiting he went home, thinking Anthony might have come out without his seeing him—but not in his heart believing it possible that he had. Finding Anthony had not returned to the inn, John Bent went again and searched the Keep with Mr. Nettleby, the superintendent of these coast-guardsmen."

"And they did not find any trace of him?"

"Not any."

"Or of any struggle, or other ill work?"

"I believe not. Oh, it is most strange!"

"Who locked the gate?—as you describe: and then opened it again?" questioned Mr. North, after a moment's pause.

"Ah, I know not. Nobody can conjecture."

"Have you searched well in this Keep yourself?"

"Oh, George, I have not dared to do it! It has a revenant."

"A *what!*" exclaimed Mr. North.

"A revenant. I have seen it, and was nearly frightened to death."

"Charlotte!"

"I know you strong men ridicule such things," said poor Madame Guise, meekly. "Anthony would have laughed just as you do. It's true, though. The Friar's Keep is haunted by a dead monk: he appears dressed in his cowl and grey habit, the same that he used to wear in life. He passes the window sometimes with a lamp in his hand."

"Since when has this revenant taken to appear?" inquired George North, after a short period of reflection. "Since Anthony's disappearance?"

"Oh, for a long, long while before it. I believe the monk died something like two hundred years ago. Why? Were you thinking, George, that it might be the revenant of poor Anthony?"

Mr. George North drew in his disbelieving lips. At a moment like the present he would not increase her pain by showing his mockery of revenants.

"What I was thinking was this, Charlotte. Whether, if poor Anthony be really no more, his destroyers may have cause to wish the Friar's Keep to remain unexplored, lest traces of him might be found, and so have improvised a revenant, as you call it, to scare people away."

"The revenant has haunted the place for years and years, George. It has been often seen."

"Then that puts an end to my theory."

"I might have had courage to search the Keep by day—for the dead, as we all believe, do not come abroad then—but that I have not dared to risk being seen there," resumed Madame Guise. "Were I to be seen going into the Friar's Keep, a place that every one shuns, it might be suspected that I had a motive, and Mr. Castlemaine would question me. Besides, my young pupil is mostly with me by day: it is only in the evening that I have unquestioned liberty."

"I wonder you reconciled yourself to go into the house as governess, Charlotte."

"For Anthony's sake," she said imploringly. "What would I not do for his sake? And then, you see, George, while Anthony does not come forward to give orders at Gap, and there is no proof that he is dead, I cannot draw money. My own income is but small."

"Why, my dear Charlotte, what are you talking of? You could have had any amount of money you pleased from me. I——"

"You forget, George: you were travelling, and could not be written to."

"Well, there was Emma," returned Mr. George, half confounded when thus confuted by his own sins.

"I did not want to give too much confidence to Emma and her husband: I have told you why. And I would have gone into Mr. Castlemaine's house, George, the opportunity offering, though I had been the richest woman in the world. But for being there, I should not have known that Mr. Castlemaine holds secret possession of Anthony's diamond ring *You* remember that ring, George."

"I remember I used jokingly to say I would steal it from him—it was so beautiful. The possession of the ring is the most damaging proof of all against my Uncle James. And yet not a certain proof."

"Not a certain proof!"

"No: for it is possible that he may have picked it up in the Friar's Keep."

"Then why should he not have shown the ring? An innocent man would have done so at once, and—here comes the preventive-man," broke off Madame Guise, her quick sight detecting the officer at some distance. "Let us go down the hill again, George."

They crossed the waste land to the road,

and went towards the hill. George North was lost in thought.

"There is something about it almost incomprehensible," he said aloud: "and for my own part, Charlotte, I must avow that I cannot yet believe the Uncle James to be guilty. The Castlemaines are recognised in their own land here as mirrors of honour. I have heard my father say so many a time. And this is so dreadful a crime to suspect anybody of! I think I saw the uncle to-day."

"Where?" she asked. And Mr. North explained the appearance of the gentleman that morning at the Turk's Head, whose carriage bore the Castlemaine crest. "Oh, yes, that was Mr. Castlemaine," she said, recognising him by the description.

"Well, he does not look like a man who would do a dreadful deed, Charlotte. He has a very attractive, handsome face: and I think a good face. Shall I tell you why I have more particularly faith in his innocence? —Because he is so like my father."

"And I have never doubted his guilt. You must admit, George, that appearances are strongly against him."

"Undoubtedly they are. And a sad thing it is to have to say it of one of the family.

Do you see much of the younger brother—the Uncle Peter ?"

"But he is dead," returned Charlotte.

"The Uncle Peter dead !"

"He died the very night that Anthony was lost : the mourning you saw Mrs. Castlemaine wearing was for him ; Ethel and the little girl have gone into slighter mourning." And Madame Guise proceeded to give a brief history of Mr. Peter Castlemaine's death and the circumstances surrounding it, with the entrance of Mary Ursula to the Grey Nunnery. He listened in silence ; just remarking that he had wondered in the morning which of his two uncles it was that he saw, and had felt half inclined to inquire of the waiter, but prudence kept him from it.

"This is the Friar's Keep," she said as they came to it, and her voice instinctively took a tone of awe. "Do you see those two middle windows, George ? It is within them that people see the revenant of the Grey Monk."

"I wish he would show himself now !" heartily spoke Mr. George, throwing his eyes on the windows. At which wish his sister-in-law drew close enough to touch him.

"Here's the gate," she said, halting as they

came to it. "Was it not a *strange* thing, George, that it should be locked that night!"

"If it really was locked; and is never locked at other times," replied George North, who quite seemed, what with one implied doubt and another, to be going in for some of the scepticism of his uncle, the Master of Greylands. Opening the gate, he walked in. Charlotte followed. They looked inside the gothic door to the dark still cloisters of the Keep; they stood for some moments gazing out over the sea, so expansive to the eye from this place: but Charlotte did not care to linger there with him, lest they should be seen.

"And it was to this place of ruins Anthony came, and passed into those unearthly-looking cloisters!" he exclaimed as they were going out. "That dark, still enceinte put me in mind of nothing so much as a dead house."

Charlotte shivered. "It is there," she said, "that we must search for traces of Anthony——"

"I suppose there is a staircase, or something of that kind, that leads to the upper rooms of the Keep?" he interrupted.

"Oh, yes: a stone staircase."

"Have you been up to the rooms?"

"I!" she exclaimed, as if he might have spared the question. "Why, it is in those upper rooms that the revenant is seen. Part of them are in ruins. Mr. Castlemaine and some men of the law he called to his aid from Stilborough went over it all after Anthony's loss, and found no traces of him. But what I think is this, George: that a search conducted by Mr. Castlemaine would not be a minute or true one: the Master of Greylands' will is law in the place: he is bowed down to like a king. How shall you manage to account plausibly for taking up your abode at Greylands, so that no suspicion may attach to you?"

"I shall be here for the purpose of sketching, you understand. An obscure travelling artist excites neither notice nor suspicion, Charlotte," he added in a half laughing tone. "By the way—there's no danger, I hope, that the little one, Marie Ursule, will remember Uncle George?"

"Not the least; not the slightest. You left her too long ago for that. But, take you notice, George, that here she is only Marie. It would not do to let her other name, Ursule, slip out."

"I will take care," replied George North.

"I think you will. I think you have altered, George. You are more thoughtful in mood, more sober in manner than you used to be."

"Ay," he answered. "That carelessness and its sad fruits altered me, Charlotte. It left me a lesson that will last me my life-time."

They were opposite the entrance of the Grey Nunnery: and, in the self-same moment its doors opened and Ethel Reene came forth, attended by Sister Ann. The sight seemed to startle Madame Guise.

"Dear me!—but it is I who am careless to-night," she said, below her breath. "Talking with you, George, has made me forget all; even time."

In fact, Madame was to have called at the Nunnery quite an hour ago for Ethel: who had been to spend the evening there with Miss Castlemaine. Madame went forward with her apologies: saying that she had met her husband's old friend, Mr. North, and had stayed talking with him of by-gone days, forgetful of the passing moments.

"I will take charge of Miss Reene now,

Sister Ann; I am so sorry you should have to put your things on," she added.

"Nay, but I am not sorry," returned Sister Ann candidly. "It is pleasant to us to get the change of a walk. Your little one has been very happy this evening, Madame Guise; playing at bo-peep and eating the grapes Miss Reene brought her.

Sister Ann retired in-doors. Madame Guise and Ethel took the front way round by the Dolphin to Greylands' Rest, Mr. George North attending them. The shortest way was across the field path; though it involved a stile, Madame took it. Mr. North talked to Ethel, and made himself very agreeable—as none could do better than he: and Miss Ethel rejoiced that it was night instead of day, for she found herself blushing repeatedly at nothing, just as she had done during his visit in the morning. What could have come to her? she mentally asked; she had never been absurd before: and she felt quite angry with herself. The conversation was held in French, Madame having unconsciously resumed that language with Mr. North when they left Sister Ann.

"There are many delightful bits of scenery in this little place," said Mr. North: "I have been looking about me this afternoon. Perhaps I may bring myself and my pencils here for a short sojourn: I should much like to take some sketches."

"Yes, they are very nice views," said Ethel, blushing again. She was walking arm in arm with the governess, and Mr. North strolled along at Ethel's elbow.

"How very well you speak French!" he exclaimed. "Almost as well as we French people ourselves. There is but a slight accent."

A deeper and quite unnecessary blush at this. "But I thought you were English, monsieur."

"Well, so I am, mademoiselle. But when you come to sojourn a long while in a country, you get to identify yourself with its inhabitants,—that is to say, with their nationality."

"And you have been for a long time in France?"

"Yes."

They had come to the stile now. Mr. North got over it and assisted Madame

Guise. Ethel mounted instantly, and was jumping down alone; but he turned and caught her. In the hurry she tripped, and somewhat crushed her hat against his shoulder. He made fifty thousand apologies, just as though it had been his fault; and there was much laughing. Mr. North quite forgot to release her hand until they had gone on some paces; and Ethel's blush at this was as hot as the summer's night.

At the entrance gate, where he had taken leave of Madame Guise in the morning, he took leave of them now; shaking the hand of Madame and asking whether he might be permitted to shake Ethel's, as it was the mode in England. The blushes were worst of all then: and Ethel's private conviction was that the whole world had never contained so attractive an individual as Mr. George North.

Mr. George North had all but regained the door of the Dolphin Inn, where he had dined and would lodge for the night, when a carriage and pair, with its bright lamps lighted, came spanking round the corner at a quick pace, the groom driving. George North, drawing aside as it passed him, re-

cognised the handsome phaeton he had seen in the morning at the Turk's Head. The Master of Greylands was returning from Stilborough.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DINING AT GREYLANDS' REST.

IT was yet early morning. The sky was darkly blue, the sea indolent and calm, the air intensely hot. Mr. George North, sitting on the bench outside the Dolphin Inn, his straw hat tilted over his brows, gazed at the placid sea before him, and felt as lazy as was the atmosphere.

He had slept well, and breakfasted to his perfect content. Young, sanguine, healthy, the mystery encompassing his brother Anthony's fate had not sufficed to break his rest. The more than hinted-at doubts of Charlotte Guise—that Anthony had been put out of the world for ever by Mr. Castlemaine—failed to find their response in George North's mind. The mere thought of it ap-

peared to him to be absurd; the suspicion far-fetched and impossible; the implied doubt of the Master of Greylands little less than a libel on the name of Castlemaine. Men of the world are inclined to be practical in their views, rather than imaginative: and the young and hopeful look ever on the bright side of all things.

That Anthony's disappearance was most unaccountable, George North felt; his continued absence, if indeed he still lived, was more strange still. There was very much to be unravelled in connection with that past February night, and George North intended to do his best to bring its doings to light: but that his brother had been destroyed in the dreadful manner implied, he could not and would not believe. Without giving credit to anything so terrible, there existed ground enough, ay and more than enough, for distrust and uncertainty. And, just as his sister-in-law, poor bereaved Charlotte, had taken up her abode at Greylands under false colours, to devote herself to search out the mystery of that disappearance within the Friar's Keep, so did George North resolve to take up his. Nothing loth, was he, to make a sojourn there. Had Anthony pre-

sented himself before him at that moment, safe and well, George would still have felt inclined to stay; for the charms of Ethel Reene had made anything but a transient impression on him. The world was his own, too; he had no particular home in it; Greylands was as welcome to him as an abode as any other resting-place.

John Bent came forth from the open door to join his guest. Landlords and their ways in those days were different folks from what they are in these. He wore no waistcoat under his loose linen coat, and his head was bare.

"A nice stretch of water, that, sir," he said, respectfully, indicating the wide sea, shining out in the distance.

"It is indeed," replied George North. "I think the place is a nice place altogether. That sea, and the cliff, rising up there, would be worth sketching. And there must be other pretty spots also."

"True enough, sir."

"I feel inclined to bring over my pencils and take up my quarters with you for a bit, and sketch these places. What do you say to it, Mr. Bent?"

"There's nothing I could say, sir, but that

it would give me and my wife pleasure if you did. We'd try and make you comfortable."

"Ay; I don't fear but you'd do that. Well, I think I shall go to Stilborough and bring back my rattletraps. I saw a charming bit of scenery yesterday when I went to call on the French lady. It is an archway covered with ivy: looking through the opening, you catch a view of a cottage with a back-ground of trees. There was a small rustic bridge also not far off, lying amid trees, and a stream of water running under it, the whole dark and sheltered. These spots would make admirable sketches."

"No doubt, sir," returned John Bent by way of answer. "But you'd have to crave the leave of the Master of Greylands before making them. And that leave might not be easy to get."

"Why not?"

"They be on his land, sir."

"What of that? Surely he would not deny it! The great Creator has not been churlish in making this world beautiful—should one man wish to keep any part of it for the enjoyment of his own sole eyesight?"

John Bent gave his head a shake. "I don't think it is that Mr. Castlemaine would do that, sir; he is not so selfish as that comes

to; but he does not like to see strangers about the place. He'd keep all strange folks out of Greylands if he could: that's my belief."

"Why should he?"

"It's just his pride and his exclusive temper, sir."

"But I thought I had heard Mr. Castlemaine described as a generous man; a pleasant-tempered man," remarked Mr. North.

"Well, and so he is, sir, when he chooses to be," confessed the landlord; "I don't say to the contrary. In many things he is as easy and liberal as a man can be. But in regard to having strangers about his land, or in the place either, he is just a despot. And I think the chances are ten to one, sir, against your getting leave to sketch any spot of his."

"I can but ask. If he refuses me, well and good. Of course I should not attempt to defy him—though I am by no means sure that he, or any one else, has the legal power to deny our copying nature's works, in man's possession though they may be. Never mind. Enough free objects will be left for me: such as that cliff, for example, and that glorious sea."

Mr. North rose as he spoke. At that same moment two of the Grey Ladies were crossing over from the Nunnery. Only one of them wore the dress of the community, Sister Margaret. The other was Miss Castlemaine, in her flowing mourning robes. Each of the ladies smiled kindly and gave the good-morrow to John Bent. George North lifted his straw hat with reverence, and kept it off until they should have passed.

Possibly the action, so uncharacteristic of most Englishmen, attracted particularly the attention of Mary Ursula. Bending slightly her head to acknowledge the courtesy, her eyes rested on the young man's face. Whether it was his action, whether it was anything she saw in the face that struck on her, certain it was that she half stopped to gaze upon him. She said nothing, however, but passed on.

"What a magnificent young woman!" cried Mr. North, when the ladies were out of hearing. "She is beautiful. I mean the lady in mourning: not the Sister."

"She is that, sir. It is Miss Castlemaine."

"Miss Castlemaine! Which Miss Castlemaine?"

"The late banker's daughter, sir. Niece to the Master of Greylands."

An hour later, the ladies went by again on their way homeward. John was outside his door still, but alone, with a white cap on his head. Miss Castlemaine accosted him.

"Who was that gentleman we saw here just now, Mr. Bent?"

"His name's North, madam; he is an artist."

"Thank you," said Miss Castlemaine.

"Why did you inquire?" asked Sister Margaret as they went on.

"Because something in the stranger's face seemed to be familiar to me—as though I had seen it before," replied Mary Ursula.

Meanwhile, Mr. George North, who seemed to do things rather upon impulse—or, at least, not to lose time in putting in practice any resolution he might make—had proceeded to Greylands' Rest, to get the permission for sketching any particular bits of scenery he fancied, which might be owned by Mr. Castlemaine. He took the field way; the same way that he and the ladies had taken the previous night, and he was nearly at the end of his journey when he encountered Mr. Castlemaine, who was coming forth from his

house with Ethel Reene. Mr. North lifted his hat, and approached to accost them.

"I beg your pardon," he said to Mr. Castlemaine, bowing at the same time to Ethel, "I believe I have the honour of speaking to the Master of Greylands."

Mr. Castlemaine recognised him at once, as the young travelling artist whom he had seen the previous day at the Turk's Head; the same who had just been talked of at his breakfast-table. This Mr. George North, it turned out, was a friend of Madame Guise, or, as Madame especially put it, of her late husband's. A *gentleman* artist, Madame had said, for he was not dependent on his profession; he had a good patrimony, and was of good family: and Mr. Castlemaine had taken all in unsuspiciously. Apart from anything trenching on the mysteries of that certain February night and of the Friar's Keep, whatever they might be, he was the least suspicious man in the world: and it no more occurred to him to connect this young man and his appearance at Greylands with that unhappy affair, than he had connected Madame with it. Mr. Castlemaine had taken rather a fancy to this young artist when at the Turk's Head; he liked the look of his

bright face now, as he came up smiling: he warmed to the open, attractive manners.

George North preferred his request. He had come to Greylands the previous day in the two-horse van from Stilborough for the purpose of calling on Madame Guise; he had been struck with the pretty place and with the many charming bits of scenery it presented, fit for the pencil: some of these spots he found belonged to the Master of Greylands; would the Master of Greylands give him permission to sketch them?

And taken, it must be repeated, by the applicant's looks and words; by his winning face, his pleasing voice, his gentlemanly bearing altogether, Mr. Castlemaine gave the permission off-hand, never staying to count the cost of any after suggestions that might arise against it. Artists had come to the place before; they had stayed a week or two and departed again, leaving no traces behind: that the same would be the case with this present one, he never thought to doubt. Mr. North was somewhat different from the others, though; inasmuch as that he was known to Madame Guise (who vouched, so to say, for his being a gentleman) and also that he had gained the liking of Mr. Castlemaine.

Mr. North warmly expressed his thanks for the readily-accorded permission. Ethel had not spoken, but was blushing perpetually as she stood listening to him—and for no cause whatever, she angrily told herself. Mr. North turned to retrace his steps, and they all walked on together.

"You have been acquainted with Madame Guise and her family some time, I find," observed the Master of Greylands. "Knew them abroad."

"Oh yes. Her husband was a dear friend of mine. We were like—" Mr. North hesitated, but brought the suggestive word out, as he had led to it—"like brothers."

"Was there anything peculiar in his death?" asked Mr. Castlemaine. "Madame Guise seems to shrink so much from all mention of the subject that we can hardly help fancying there was: and it is a topic that we cannot question her upon. He died suddenly, she said one day, when some allusion was made to him, and that is all we know. Mrs. Castlemaine observed that she shivered perceptibly as she said it."

"That is what I heard—that he died suddenly," assented Mr. North. "I was roaming about Italy at the time, and did not know

of it for some months afterwards. Madame Guise had left for England then. I procured her address ; and, being so near, called to see her yesterday."

Mr. Castlemaine slightly nodded—as if this part scarcely needed explanation. "Then you do not know what Monsieur Guise died of, Mr. North ? She has not told you ?"

"No, she has not. I do not know what he died of. They were very much attached to one another, and her avoidance of the subject may be perhaps natural. He was an estimable young man, and my very good and dear friend."

Thus talking, the fields were traversed and they gained the road. Here their routes lay in opposite directions : that of the Master of Greylands and Ethel to the right, Mr. North's to the left. He was returning to the Dolphin before starting on his walk to Stilborough.

"You are staying at the inn, I presume," observed Mr. Castlemaine to him.

"Yes, I am comfortable there, and the charges are very moderate. I called for my bill this morning."

"Called for your bill ! Are you going away ?"

"Only to come back again this afternoon. I left my portmanteau and pencils at Stilborough."

"Well, we shall be happy to welcome you at Greylands' Rest whenever you feel inclined to call on Madame Guise," spoke Mr. Castlemaine in parting. "Will you dine with us this evening?"

"Thank you. With very much pleasure."

Mr. Castlemaine cordially shook hands, and turned away. It was rare indeed that the Master of Greylands condescended to be so free with a stranger—or, in fact, with any one. Any previous visiting-artists to the place might have looked in vain for a hand-shake. But his heart warmed to this young man; he knew not why: and there was something in Mr. North's bearing, though it was perfectly respectful to the Master of Greylands, which seemed to testify that he was, and knew himself to be, of the same social standing in society; at least, that gentleman's equal.

But that the propensity, which we all have, to take likes and dislikes seems to obey no rule or law, and is never to be accounted for, it might be noticed as a curious circumstance here. When Mr. Castlemaine first saw the

unfortunate Anthony, he had taken a dislike to him. How far the avowed errand of that young man—the putting in a claim to Greylands' Rest—may have conduced to this, cannot be told: Mr. Castlemaine would have said that it had nothing to do with it; that he disliked him by instinct. Most people had seen nothing in Anthony but what was to be liked; ay, and much liked; Mr. Castlemaine was an exception. And yet, here was Anthony's brother (though Mr. Castlemaine knew it not) to whom his heart was going out as it had never yet before gone out to a stranger! Truly these instincts are more capricious than a woman's will!

George North ran into the Dolphin, caught up his umbrella to shield himself from the sun, and started on his hot walk to Stilborough. In the course of the afternoon he was back again with what he was pleased to call his rattletraps—a portmanteau and a sketching-case—having chartered a fly to Greylands. There was no two-horse van at his disposal that afternoon.

"Do you get much of this fiery weather?" he asked, throwing himself down by Mrs. Bent in her sitting-room and his hat on the table, while the landlord saw to his luggage.

"Well, we have our share of it, sir, when it's a hot summer. And this is a very hot one. Just see the sea yonder: even that looks hot."

"I shall take a dip presently and try it," returned Mr. North. "That must be the best of living at the sea-side: you get glorious baths."

"You have not told me what you'd like for dinner yet, sir," resumed Mrs. Bent, who was stripping currants into a pan, her face and the currants and the cherry cap-ribbons all one and the same colour.

"Dinner! Why I am going to dine at Greylands' Rest. Its master asked me."

"*Did* he!" cried Mrs. Bent in surprise. "Well that's a great thing for him to do. He don't favour new comers, sir."

"He has so far favoured me. I say, Mrs. Bent," added the artist, a laughing look in his bright eyes, "what a pretty girl that is, up there!"

Mrs. Bent raised her own eyes from the stripping, and shot forth an inquiring glance. He was helping himself to the ripest bunches.

"Miss Ethel Reene! Well, so she is, sir, and as good as she is pretty. There's no love lost—as it is said—between her and her

stepmother. At any rate, on Mrs. Castlemaine's part. The servants say Miss Ethel gets snubbed and put upon above a bit. She has to give way finely to the little one."

"Who is the little one?—Just look at this large bunch! Twenty on it, I know."

"You'll get a surfeit, sir, if you eat at these sharp currants like that when you are so hot."

"Not I. I never tasted any so good."

"I shall charge you for them, sir," she went on, laughing.

"All right. Charge away. I have heard my father tell a tale of going into a cherry-orchard once when he was a lad, he and three more boys. They paid sixpence each, and eat what they liked. I fancy all four had a surfeit, or something, after that."

"I dare be bound. Boys in a cherry-orchard! Do you get fine currants in France, sir?"

"We get everything that's fine there," responded Mr. North, as well as he could speak for the currants. "But what little one were you talking of, Mrs. Bent?"

"Of Miss Flora, sir: Mrs. Castlemaine's daughter. A troublesome, ill-behaved little chit, she is: always in mischief. The last

time we were brewing; it's only a few days ago; my young lady was passing the door and ran in: she went rushing to the brew-house, and fell backwards into the mash-tub. Fortunately the liquor had been drawn off; but there she was, squealing in the wet grains."

Mr. North laughed, and rose. Abandoning the currants, he put on his hat and went leisurely out to take his plunge in the sea. By-and-by, when Mrs. Bent and John were seated at tea he came running back in a commotion, his wet towels in his hand.

"Can you tell me at what time they dine at Greylands' Rest?"

"At six o'clock, sir, when they dine late," replied John. "Mostly, though, it's in the middle of the day."

"And as often five o'clock as six," put in Mrs. Bent. "The earlier Mrs. Castlemaine dines, the better she likes it. You have not half dried your hair, sir."

"I had no time for superfluous drying," he replied. "It suddenly struck me that I did not know the hour for dinner, and I came off as I could. Is that the right time?" looking at the clock. "A quarter past five?"

"Right to a minute, sir. This clock never fails."

"And you say, Mrs. Bent, that they sometimes dine at five. What will they think of me?"

He went leaping up the stairs, saying something about the thoughtless ways of wandering Arabs—by which the landlord and his wife understood him to mean artists. An incredibly short time, and he was down again, dressed, and striding off to Greylands' Rest.

The first thing Mr. North noticed, on entering the gate of the garden, was the flutter of a white dress amid a nest of trees. It was enough to assure him that the dinner had not begun. He penetrated these trees, attracted by the voices within, and found himself in sight of Ethel Reene, and the young damsel recently spoken of—Miss Flora.

The white dress he had seen was Ethel's. It was an Indian sprigged muslin, set off with black ribbons. Her rich brown hair, so bright in the flicker of sunshine, had nothing to adorn it: her delicate face wore one of its sweetest blushes as he approached. She sat in a kind of grotto formed by the trees, a book resting in her lap while she talked to

Flora. That young lady, unmindful of her holiday attire—a costly and very pretty frock of grey silken gauze, for Mrs. Castlemaine had said she might dine at table—was astride on one of the branches. Ethel had in vain told her not to get up there. She jumped down at the sight of Mr. North : the frock was caught, and the result was a woeful rent.

"There!" exclaimed Ethel in an undertone, for Mr. North had not quite reached them. "Your beautiful new frock! What a pity! If I were mamma I should never buy you anything but stuff and cotton."

Flora, even, looked down ruefully at the damage : the frock was new, as Ethel said, costly, and beautiful.

"Pin it up, Ethel."

"I have no pins here. Besides, pinning would not hold it. It can only be mended. You had better show it to Eliza."

The spoilt child ran past Mr. North on her way indoors. He came up to Ethel, bowed, and then held his hand out. With another bright and deeper blush she put hers into it.

"I shall get quite the English manners soon," he said, smiling. "We do not shake

hands much in my country: especially with young ladies. They do not let us."

"Do you call France your country?"

"Well, I am apt to do so, having lived there so much. I have been making great haste here, Miss Reene, not knowing the hour for dinner."

"We dine at six," replied Ethel. "Mamma has but just returned from her drive, and is dressing," she added, as if in apology for being the only one to receive him. "Papa has been out all the afternoon."

"Is Madame Guise well to-day?"

"Not very. She has one of her bad headaches, I am sorry to say, and is in her room. She will be here shortly."

He sat down by Ethel, and took up the book she had been reading; a very old and attractive book indeed—the "Vicar of Wakefield."

"What an excellent story it is!" he exclaimed.

"Have you read it?" asked Ethel, rising to proceed to the house.

"Indeed I have. Twenty times, I should think. My mother had a small store of these old English works, and I and my brother revelled in them."

"You have brothers and sisters?"

"Only one sister now. She is married and lives in France."

"Ah, then I can understand why you like to go thither so much," said Ethel, all unconscious that it was his native land; that he had never before been in England. "Is her husband French?"

"Yes," replied Mr. North. "Oh, what a lovely rose!" he cried, halting at a tree they were passing, perhaps to change the conversation.

It was in truth one of rare beauty: small, bright, delicate, and of exquisite fragrance. Ethel, in her impulsive good nature, in her innocent thoughtlessness, plucked it and offered it to him. As he took it from her, their eyes met: in his own shone a strangely-earnest look of gratitude for the gift, mingled with admiration. Poor Ethel became crimson at the thought of what she had done, and would have regained the flower had it been possible. She went on quickly to the glass-doors of the drawing-room; Mr. North followed, placing the rose in his button-hole.

Madame Guise was entering the room by the inner door at the same moment. Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine soon appeared; lastly,

Miss Flora, in her mended frock. Harry Castlemaine was not at home; some errand, either of business or pleasure, had taken him to Stilborough. Harry had been out a great deal of late: there seemed to be a restlessness upon him, and his father was beginning to notice it.

Mr. North was received (as he heard later from Madame Guise) quite en famille—which pleased him much. No alteration was made in the usual style of dinner: but the dinners at Greylands' Rest were always sufficiently good for chance company. As George North sat at table, watching the master at the head board, he could not bring himself to believe that Charlotte's suspicions were correct. Good-looking, refined, courtly, pleasing, Mr. Castlemaine appeared to be the very last man capable of committing a secret crime. Every other moment some gesture of his, or glance, or tone in the voice, put George North in mind of his father, Basil Castlemaine: and—no, he could not, he *could not* join in the doubts of poor Anthony's wife.

But he noticed one thing. That ever and anon Mr. Castlemaine would seem to forget where he was, forget his position as host, and fall into a fit of silent abstraction, during

which, a curiously-sad expression lay on his face, and his brow was knit as with some painful care. He would rouse himself as soon as he perceived he was mentally absent, and be in an instant the grand, courtly, self-possessed Master of Greylands again. But the fits of gloom did occur, and George North observed them.

Nevertheless, he could not entertain the dread suspicions of his sister-in-law. That a vast deal of mystery attached to his brother's disappearance, and that Mr. Castlemaine was in some degree and manner connected with it, or cognisant of it, he readily saw cause to recognize: but, of the darker accusation, he believed him to be innocent. And it went with George North very much against the grain to sit at Mr. Castlemaine's hospitable table under false colours, and not to declare the fact that he was his brother Basil's son.

Something of this he said to Madame Guise. Dinner over, the party strolled into the garden, grateful for the little breath of air it brought. Mr. North found himself momentarily alone with Madame, near the grand sweeping elm tree.

"Are you mad, George?" she hastily cried in French and in the deepest alarm, in re-

sponse to the word or two he whispered. "Wish to declare yourself! not like to be here only as Mr. North! For the love of heaven, recall your senses."

"It is terrible deceit, Charlotte."

"Do you no longer care for your unfortunate brother? Have you lost all remembrance of your love for him?—of the ties of kindred?—of the time when you played together at your mother's knee! Do you think it cost *me* nothing to come here under a wrong name—that it costs me no self-reproaches to be here under sham pretences, I who have as keen a sense of honour as you? But I do it for Anthony's sake; I bear all the feeling of disgrace for him."

"That is just it," said George, "as it seems to me. Disgrace."

"It must be borne—for my sake, and for Anthony's. Were you to say, 'I am George, Anthony's brother,' Mr. Castlemaine would take alarm; he would turn you out of the house, and me after you; and, rely upon it, we should never discover more of poor Anthony than we know now. It would still all be uncertain. No, mon ami, go you away from Greylands if you like, and leave me to seek on alone; but, declare yourself you must

not. Anthony would rise from his grave at your unnatural conduct."

"Charlotte, you are exciting yourself for nothing," he hastily whispered, for Mrs. Castlemaine was approaching. "I did not say I was going to declare myself; I only said how unpalatable to me is the acting of this deceit. But for Anthony's sake and yours, I would not bear it for a moment; as circumstances are, I must go on with it, and be George North perhaps to the end of the chapter."

"Not to the end," she murmured, "not to the end. Anthony's fate will be discovered before very long time has elapsed—or my prayers and tears will have found no pity in heaven."

Only at dusk did they go in to tea. Afterwards, Ethel was bade sing some of her songs. George North—no mean musician himself, and with a soft, pleasant voice of his own—sat by the piano, listening to their melody, gazing through the twilight at her sweet face, and thinking that he had never been so nearly in an earthly paradise.

When he took his departure, they accompanied him to the gate. The stars were out, the night was clear and still, the heat yet excessive. It chanced that he and Ethel

walked side by side; it chanced that he held her hand, ay, and pressed it too, longer than he had need have done when he said good-night. That moment's parting would remain in Ethel's memory for life; the heavy perfume of the flowers lay around them, her heart and pulses were alike beating.

If she and George North had not fallen in love with one another, they were at least on the high road towards it.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### IN THE VAULTS.

TIME had again gone on. It was autumn weather. Mr. George North was making a tolerably long sojourn in the place, and seemed to be passing his days agreeably. Sketching, boating, gossiping; one would have said he had no earthly care. Perhaps he had not—save the one sweet care of making himself acceptable to Ethel Reene.

The fate of each was over and done with long ago, so far as that grand master passion of the heart went—love. Ethel was helplessly in love with him for all time. "Ma caprice est faite," she might have said to Madame Guise in that lady's native language; and Madame would have opened her eyes to hear it. For, in regard to the affection that

had sprung up between those two young people, Madame was entirely in the dark. Not very observant by nature, her whole thoughts occupied with the one great trouble of her life, she remained wholly unsuspicious of what was passing in the inner life of those around her.

George North's love for Ethel made his very existence. The purest, truest affection man can feel, beat in his heart for Ethel Reene. To meet, was with both of them the one great event of the day; the hope to be looked forward to when they rose in the morning, the remembrance that glowed within their breasts at night. On the solitary cliffs up by the coastguard station; or down on the sheltered beach of the sea-shore, towards the Limpets; or amid the lovely scenery where he carried his pencils—in one place or another they were sure to meet. The soft wind seemed to whisper love-songs, the varying tints of the autumn foliage were as the brilliant colours of the trees on the everlasting shores, the very air was fraught with a heavenly perfume; and the world for each was as the Garden of Eden.

Mrs. Castlemaine was no more wise than Madame. She had discerned nothing. Per-

haps their first intimacy grew during a few days that she was absent from home. Disappointed of the promised excursion to Paris —for Mr. Castlemaine had allowed the months to go on and on, and did not attempt to enter on it— Mrs. Castlemaine set off on a ten days' visit to some friends in the adjoining county, taking Flora with her. This was close upon the appearance of George North at Greylands. Ethel, left at home under the chaperonage of Madame, saw a good deal of Mr. George North : and the mutual liking, already rising in either heart, perfected itself into love. Long before Mrs. Castlemaine's ten days of absence had come to an end, they were secretly conscious that they were all in all to each other.

Mrs. Castlemaine returned, and neither saw nor suspected anything. Perhaps she was not likely to suspect. People don't go about betraying the most secretive passion man can feel, or write the words, I love, in brazen letters on their foreheads. True love is essentially reticent, hiding itself away from the eye of man within the remotest folds of the shrinking heart. Neither had Mr. North breathed a word to Ethel. He was not prepared to do it. Before he could speak, he

must be able to declare his own true name to her and to her step-parents, to say "I am George Castlemaine." And circumstances would not let him do that yet.

He had learned absolutely nothing in regard to his brother's fate: to unravel aught of the mystery attending it seemed to be beyond his power. He had explored, as he believed, every nook and portion of the Friar's Keep; but without success of any kind. It appeared to be a lonely, deserted, and in places a dilapidated building, affording no spots for concealment. There existed not a trace of Anthony; there was nothing to show that he had ever entered it. George North stayed on at the Dolphin, waiting patiently for the elucidation that might or might not come; listening, whenever they met, to his sister-in-law's most persistent belief that it *would* come; and perfectly contented so to stay on while he could see Ethel and feed his heart's love for her, though the stay had been for ever.

Midnight was striking from the old turret-clock of the Grey Nunnery. Standing at the open window of her bed-chamber, was Miss Castlemaine. She had put off the mourning

for her father now, and assumed the grey dress of the Sisterhood. A warm black shawl was wrapped about her shoulders, for the night air was somewhat cold, and the breeze from the sea brought a chillness with it. It was late for any of the Grey Sisters to be up; unless detained by sickness, they went to rest early: but Miss Castlemaine had come in rather late from spending the evening at Greylands' Rest, and had afterwards sat up writing a long letter. She had now been in her room some little time; but had not yet begun to undress. To use an old saying, she had no sleep in her eyes. Putting the warm shawl on, she opened the window, and stood leaning on its sill, deep in thought as she gazed out at the wide expanse of sea. Hardly a night had passed of the past summer but she had thus stood as she was standing now. To look thus over the still sea in its calmness during this silent hour, or at its heaving waves, flashing white under the moon or starlight, and lost in thought and care, was a positive luxury to Miss Castlemaine. But these autumn nights were getting somewhat cold for it.

It was not her own proper chamber that she was in, but Sister Mildred's. Sister

Mildred was away. Her health was much better; but Mr. Parker, the doctor, had said most positively that a change of a month or two was necessary to complete her cure: and Sister Mildred departed to stay with some relatives whom she had not seen for many years. She would be returning shortly now, and Mary Ursula's occupancy of her room was only temporary. The approach of cold weather had caused some necessary alterations in Mary Ursula's chamber—the old grate was being replaced by a new one, and the chimney repaired: and during its process, she occupied the chamber of Sister Mildred.

The lapse of months had not diminished the uneasiness of Mary Ursula's mind, in regard to the disappearance of her unfortunate cousin Anthony in the Friar's Keep. That Keep still wore for her an atmosphere of uncertainty and mystery. She never thought of it—and it was more often in her thoughts than she would have liked to say—but with one of those unpleasant thrills of renewed pain that arise at times with us all, when some heavy sorrow or suspense lies latent in the heart. Over and over again, since the night when Sister Mildred had discovered to her the secret passage, and she had explored

with that lady its subterranean depth and length, had the wish—nay, the resolve—made itself heard within her to go again through the same passage, and look a little about the Friar's Keep. She knew not how, she knew not why, but the fear that Anthony had been treacherously dealt with grew of stronger conviction day by day. Not by Mr. Castlemaine; she could never fear that: and she resented the doubt cast upon him by the world—which he in his haughty pride would not condescend to resent—and believed that the discovery of the truth, if it could be made, would be doing her uncle the best of services. By exploring, herself, the Friar's Keep, she might be able to trace out nothing; but at least the strong desire to try lay upon her. Is it not so with all of us? In any search or complexity, do we not always mistrust others, and the capability of others, and think in our secret hearts that we could succeed where they fail? The figure Mary had seen with her own eyes, bearing its lamp, and which was religiously believed by the small community of Greylands to be the ghost of the wicked monk, long dead and gone, possessed no supernatural terrors for her. That it was some living personage, personating the dead

monk for a purpose, she felt sure of; and she could not help fancying that in some unimaginable manner it must have to do with the concealment of the fate of Anthony.

Circumstances had brought all these matters more especially to her mind to-night. An old friend of hers, a Mrs. Hunter of Stilborough, had been also a visitor, though a chance one, that evening at Greylands' Rest. Mrs. Hunter was very fond of Mr. Castlemaine. She scouted the doubt thrown upon him in connection with his vanished nephew, regarding it as the height of absurdity; and *to show* this opinion of hers, rather liked talking of the affair. She had introduced it that evening at Greylands' Rest, asking all sorts of questions about the Keep, and about the ghost that sometimes appeared there, and about Anthony. During this conversation, Mary Ursula noticed that her uncle was remarkably silent; and once she caught a look of strangely painful uneasiness on his face. As they were walking home—for it was Mr. Castlemaine himself who had brought her back to the Grey Nunnery—she ventured to speak of it to him.

"You have never heard in any way of Anthony, I suppose, Uncle James?"

"Never," was Mr. Castlemaine's reply.

"Is it not strange that some of his friends in France do not inquire after him? He must have had friends there."

"I'm sure I don't know," was the curt answer.

"What do *you* think became of him, uncle?"

"My dear, the affair has altogether so annoyed me that I don't care to think. We will drop it, Mary Ursula."

Now, this was not satisfactory—and Mary felt that it was not. Of course it closed her lips upon the subject of Anthony; but she put another question not much less hazardous.

"Who is that figure that shows himself sometimes as the ghost of the Grey Monk?"

"I do not understand you."

The answer caused her to pause: the tone of it was certainly resentful.

"He walks about with his lamp, uncle."

"Well?"

"Surely you do not believe in it—that it is really a ghost?" she exclaimed in astonishment.

"I am content not to be wiser than my neighbours," replied Mr. Castlemaine. "I suppose I have some elements of super-

stition within me. We are none of us responsible for our own nature, you know, Mary Ursula."

She said no more. In fact they reached the Nunnery gate just then. Mr. Castlemaine saw her indoors, and went back again. Mary sat late, writing her letter, and then came up to her room.

She was thinking over it all now, as she stood at the window, the fresh sea air blowing upon her somewhat heated brow. There was no moon, but the night was passably light. Gentle waves stirred the surface of the water; a faint ripple might be heard from the incoming tide. It had turned some three hours since, and now covered, as Mary knew, the narrow path underneath the Nunnery, but not the strip of beach at the Friar's Keep: that beach, however, would be inaccessible for some hours, except by sea. Some night boats were out beyond Greylands, fishing as usual: she could discover their lights in the distance. Almost immediately opposite to her and not far off, stood a two-masted vessel at anchor. She wondered why it should have stayed in that solitary spot, so close in-shore, instead of the more customary place off the beach. It may be almost said that she saw and

thought these things unconsciously in her mind's pre-occupation.

Nothing surprised her more—nay, half as much—as Mr. Castlemaine's implied admission of his belief in the supernatural appearance of the Grey Friar. An impression was abroad among the fishermen that the Castlemaines believed in the ghost as fully as they themselves did: but until to-night, Mary had smiled at this. Look on what side she would, it seemed to be mystery upon mystery.

More food, than this subject, and quite as unpleasant, though of a different nature, had been given to Mary that night by Mrs. Hunter. One of Mary's chief friends in Stilborough had been a Mrs. Ord; she and Mary had been girls together. The husband, Colonel Ord, was in India; the young wife, who was delicate, remained at home. Sad news had now arrived from India. Colonel Ord was dead. He had died suddenly; it was supposed in consequence of excitement at the failure of an Indian bank, in which all his property was placed. Mrs. Hunter had imparted this news at Greylands' Rest: and she had moreover whispered an announcement that had just been made public—the engagement of William Blake-Gordon to the heiress of

Mountsorrel. Little marvel that Mary's eyes had no sleep in them!

Her reflections—and they were very painful—were interrupted by some stir that appeared to be taking place on board the two-masted vessel. Suddenly, as it seemed to her, two boats shot out from it, one after the other. The men, rowing them, seemed to be steering right for this end of the Nunnery; and Mary watched with surprise. No: they were making, it was quite evident now, for the Friar's Keep higher up. Stretching out at the casement window as far as she dared stretch, Mary saw them go straight on for the little beach there; she thought she heard a bustle; she fancied she distinguished whispers. Wild ideas, devoid of reason, arose within her: in the broad, matter-of-fact daylight, she might have felt ashamed of their improbability; but the imagination, when excited, soars away on curious wings. Were these boats bringing back Anthony?

The night went on. She saw other boats come: she saw boats go back; she saw them come again. Surely she was not dreaming all this! and yet it seemed an impossible pageantry. At length a powerful impulse took possession of her—she would go through

the secret passage and try and solve the mystery: go then and there.

Fastening her warm black shawl more securely round her, and tying on a dark silk hood, she unlocked her drawers to get the keys of the passage, and descended softly the stairs. In descending them it had not seemed very lonely—though a sense of loneliness does strike upon one when making a solitary pilgrimage about even an inhabited house at the dead of night, when everybody else is abed and asleep. But when she came to go down the stone steps to the damp vaults below, lighted only by the solitary lantern she held, then Mary's courage deserted her. Brave and good woman though she was, she halted in a kind of terror, and asked herself whether she could go on alone. Alone she must go if she went at all: not for a great deal would she disclose the fact of this existing passage to any of the Sisters, or let them know of her errand in it. Sister Mildred was the only one who shared the secret, and Sister Mildred was not there.

Taking a few minutes to recover herself; to strive, ay, and to pray for returning courage; Mary at length went on. Arrived at the door, she unlocked it with great trouble:

the lock was no less rusty than before, and now there was only one pair of hands to it; and she went swiftly along the passage in a sort of desperate perseverance. The door at the other end unlocked, but with just as much difficulty, she once more, for the second time in her life, found herself in the cloistered vaults underneath the Keep.

Pausing again to gather what bravery would come to her, her hand pressed on her beating heart, she then proceeded about the place with her lantern; throwing its light here, throwing it there. At first she could see no trace of anyone, living or dead; could hear no sound. Soon she halted abruptly; a thought had come across her, bringing a sick fear—suppose she should not be able to find her way back to the passage door, but must remain where she was until daylight? Daylight! what light of day could penetrate those unearthly vaults?—they must be always, by day and by night, as dark as the grave. As she stood undecided whether to search farther or to go back at once, she became conscious of a whiff of fresh air, that brought with it a smell of the sea.

Stepping gently in its direction, she found herself at an opening. A door, it seemed:

whatever it was, it was open to the strip of beach under the Friar's Keep, and to the sea beyond it. All seemed perfectly still; there was neither sight nor sound of human being; but as she stood in the stillness she caught the distant regular dip of the oars in the water, belonging no doubt to the retreating boats.

What could it mean?—what could it all be? Even this opening, in the hitherto-supposed-to-be impregnable walls—was it a new opening, or did it exist always? Mary stood wondering, listening, looking; or, rather, peering: peering into the darkness of the night, for it was not light enough to *look*.

These vaults, how much farther did they extend? She could not conjecture, and dared not attempt to discover, lest she lost her way back again: all the interstices of these pillared cloisters seemed one so like another that she might not risk it. Turning away from the fresh breeze and the welcome smell of the sea, she began to retrace her steps.

To retrace her steps, as she imagined, her thoughts very full. The question had been mooted, by people unacquainted with the place—were there any means by which the unfortunate Anthony Castlemaine could be effectually disposed of, if the worst had hap-

pened to him : say, any facility for throwing them into the sea. The answer had always been No, not from the Friar's Keep, for the Keep had no communication of any kind with the sea, its walls were thick and impervious. But, it seemed that there was a communication with the sea—as Mary had now just seen. Her thoughts and her breath alike came unpleasantly quick, and she groped along, and laid her disengaged hand on her bosom to still its pain.

But where was the door ? Where ? She thought she had been going in its direction, but she had come far enough, and to spare, and here was no sign of it. Was she indeed lost in this ghostly place ? Her heart beat ten times more wildly at the thought.

She was very cautious in the use of the lantern, lest it might betray her, should any one chance to be there : carrying it close before her, and keeping three of its sides dark. She moved it here, she moved it there : but no trace of the door did it shine upon ; and in her desperation, she pushed down the three dark slides, and flung the light aloft. Nothing was to be seen but the dark stone floor of the vaults, their intersected pillars and arches above, and the openings between

them. One spot, one division, was ever just like another. Lost! lost!

Her hand fell with the lantern: the drops of fear broke out on her face. At that moment a sound, as of the banging of a door, echoed among the pillars, and she hastily hid the glaring lantern under her shawl.

Other sounds came. Some door had evidently been shut, for now it was being barred and bolted. It was not very near, and Mary Ursula waited. Then, turning on the full light of her lantern again, and keeping her back to the sounds, she went swiftly, blindly about, in search of the passage door.

Ah, what a blessing! There it was, now, before her. Perhaps in all her life she had never experienced a moment of relief like that. A sound of joy faintly escaped her; an aspiration of thankfulness went up from her heart.

She had brought the keys inside with her, as a precaution, in case the door should close; they were tied together with string, and she had lodged the key belonging to this door in the lock on this side: Sister Mildred had done the same on the occasion of their first expedition. But now, as she stood there, Mary found she could not easily draw the key

out: it might have got turned in the lock, and the lock was hard and unmanageable: so she had to put down the lantern, first of all closing its three sides, and take both hands to the key.

She had just got it out and pushed the door open, and was gliding softly and swiftly through, when a great bright light was thrown upon her, and a rough hand grasped her shoulder. With a cry of awful terror, Mary turned, and saw a pistol held close to her face.

"O don't!" she cried—"spare me! spare me! I am Sister Mary Ursula—I am Miss Castlemaine."

The man, who looked young, and was short and sturdy, turned in the doorway, with his dark lantern, never speaking a word. At that unlucky moment, the door swung against his elbow, and the pistol went off. Down he dropped with a hoarse scream.

Whether Mary Ursula retained her senses for the instant, she never afterwards knew. Fear, and the instinct of self-preservation would have caused her to fly: but how could she leave the wounded man to his fate? The whole place seemed to be reeling around her; her head swam, and she stood back against the wall for support.

"Are you alone here?" she asked, bending down, when she could get her breath and some little strength into her shrinking spirit.

"I be, ma'am. The rest are all gone."

Why! surely she knew that voice! Taking her lantern, she threw its light upon his face, and recognized Walter Dance, Dance the fisherman's son: a young fellow with whom she had had a friendly chat only yesterday; and to whom she had given many a little present when he was a lad.

"Is it you, Walter!" she exclaimed, with the utmost astonishment—and to find that it was he seemed to chase away as by magic her worst fears. "What were you doing here?"

No answer—except some dismal groans.

"Are you much hurt?"

"I am just killed," he moaned. "Oh, ma'am! who is to help me?"

Who indeed! Mary Ursula had an innate dread of such calamities as this; she had a true woman's sensitive heart, shrinking terribly from the very thought of contact with these woes of life. "I do not know that I can help you, Walter," she said faintly. "Where are you hurt? Do you think you could get up?"

He began to try, and she helped him to his

feet. One arm, the left, was powerless; and the young man said his left side was also. He leaned upon her, begging pardon for the liberty, and looked about him in dismay.

"Where does this here passage lead to, ma'am?"

"To the Grey Nunnery. Could you manage to walk to it?"

"I must get somewhere, lady, where I can be aided. I feel the blood a-dripping down me. If the bullet is not inside of me, it must have bedded itself in the wall."

The blood came from the arm. Beginning to feel faint again, feeling also very much as though she had been the cause of this, perhaps had cost the young man his life, Mary Ursula bound up the arm as well as she could, with her handkerchief and with his.

"Will you go on with me to the Nunnery, Walter?"

"Yes, ma'am, an' I can get there. I never knew of this here passage."

She locked the door, took the keys and the two lanterns herself, giving him the pistol, and bade Walter lean upon her. The walking seemed to hurt him very much, and he moaned frequently. In spite of his hardy fisherman's life, he was a very bad one to bear

pain. When they came to the vaults of the Nunnery and had to ascend the stairs, his face turned livid, and he clutched Miss Castlemaine tightly to save himself from falling. The pistol dropped from his hand once.

She got him into a small room off the kitchen, where accidents had been attended to before—for indeed the Grey Nunnery was somewhat of a hospital, and the good Sisters were its tender nurses. A wide, hard, capacious sofa was there, and down he sank upon it. Mary stayed to light a candle, and then hastened away to get help.

"You shall have a little brandy directly, Walter," she said. "I am going now to call assistance: we must get Mr. Parker here."

He only moaned in answer: the agony in his side seemed dreadful: but as Miss Castlemaine was leaving the room, he called her back again.

"Lady," he cried with feverish earnestness, and there was a wildly eager look in his eyes as they sought hers, "don't tell how it was done; don't tell where you saw me, or aught about it. I shall say my pistol went off in the chapel ruins, and that I crawled here to your door to get succour. I've got a reason for it."

"Very well; be it so," assented Miss Castlemaine, after a pause of reflection. It would be at least as inconvenient for her, were the truth confessed, as for him.

He looked frightfully pale: and, to Miss Castlemaine's horror, she saw some drops of blood dripping from his clothes, which must proceed from the wound in his side. Flying up the stairs, she entered the first chamber, where Sisters Ann and Phœby slept; aroused them with a word or two of explanation, and was back again almost instantly with some water and the flask of brandy kept for emergencies. The Sisters were down almost as soon as she was; they were both capable women in a case such as this, almost as good themselves as a doctor. They saw to his side and bound it up, just as Mary Ursula had bound his arm. Sister Ann then ran off for Mr. Parker, and Sister Phœby went to the kitchen to light the fire and prepare hot water, leaving Miss Castlemaine alone with the patient.

END OF VOL. II.

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